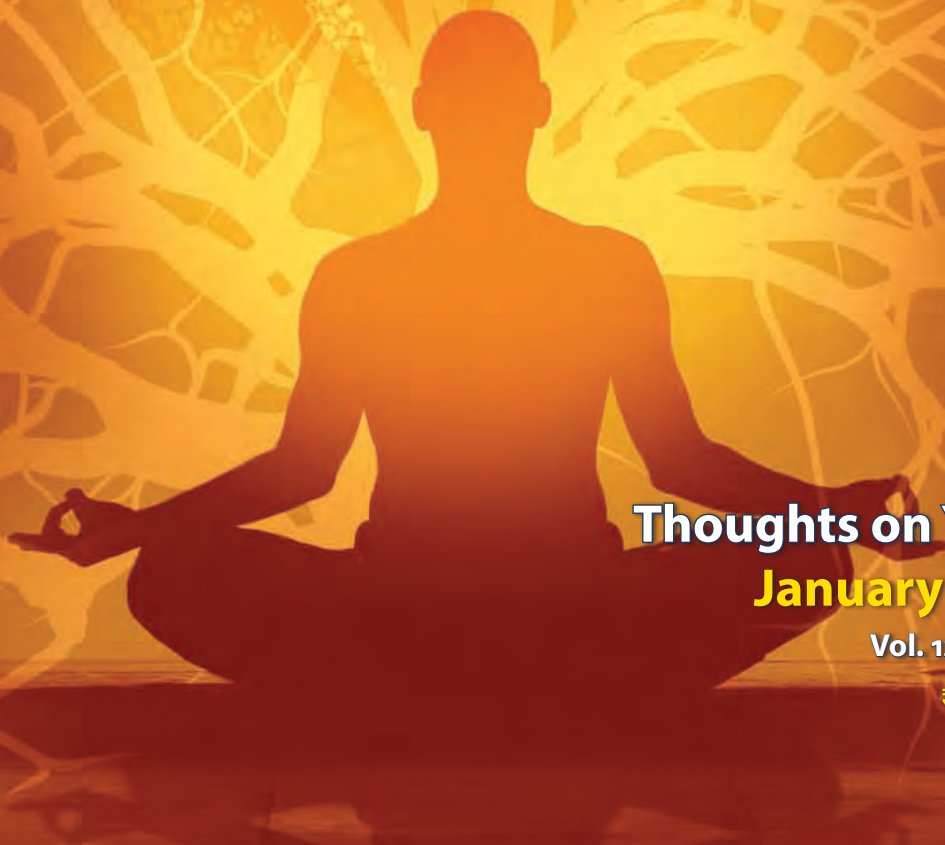


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



Thoughts on Yoga
January 2019

Vol. 124, No. 1

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Practical Tips for Yoga

We have become so materialistic. The body has become the ideal, nothing else. Therefore a little physical help is necessary. First, to sit in the posture in which you can sit still for a long time. All the nerve currents which are working pass along the spine. The spine is not intended to support the weight of the body. Therefore the posture must be such that the weight of the body is not on the spine. Let it be free from all pressure. There are some other preliminary things. The food must be simple and taken several times [a day] instead of once or twice. Never get very hungry. 'He who eats too much cannot be a Yogi. He who fasts too much cannot be a Yogi.' Proper food, proper exercise, proper sleep, proper wakefulness—these are necessary for any success. What the proper food is we have to determine ourselves. Nobody can determine that [for us]. As a general practice, we have to shun exciting food. We do not know how to vary our diet with our occupation. We always forget that it is the food out of which we manufacture everything we have. So the amount and kind of energy that we want, the food must determine. Sattvika people are very thoughtful, quiet, and patient. They take food in small quantities, and never anything bad. Then there are various sorts of breathing exercises. Take a deep breath and fill the lungs. Slowly throw the breath out. Take it through one nostril and fill the lungs, and throw it out slowly through the other nostril. Some of us do not breathe



deeply enough. Others cannot fill the lungs enough. These breathings will correct that very much. The other exercises should be practiced very slowly. And measure your strength. If ten minutes are a drain, only take five. All the different parts are inundated with breath. It is through breath that we gain control of them all. Disharmony in parts of the body is controlled by more flow of the nerve currents towards them. The Yogi ought to be able to tell when in any part pain is caused by less vitality or more. He has to equalize that. Another condition [for success in Yoga] is chastity. It is the cornerstone of all practice. If you can conserve and use the energy properly, it leads you to God. Inverted, it is hell itself. It is much easier to do anything upon the external plane, but the greatest conqueror in the world finds himself a mere child when he tries to control his own mind. This is the world he has to conquer—the greater and more difficult world to conquer. Do not despair! Awake, arise, and stop not until the goal is reached!

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1. 501-04



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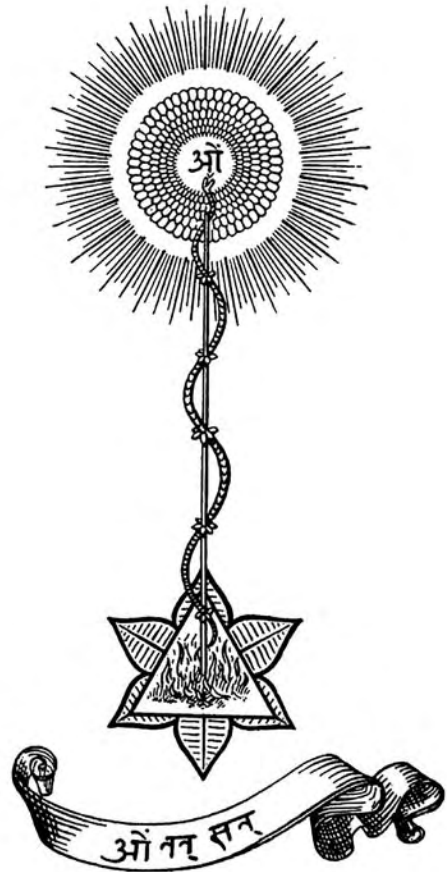
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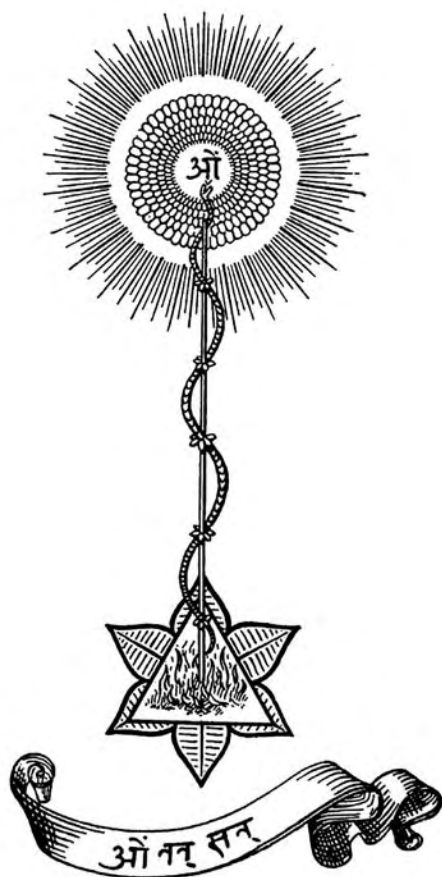
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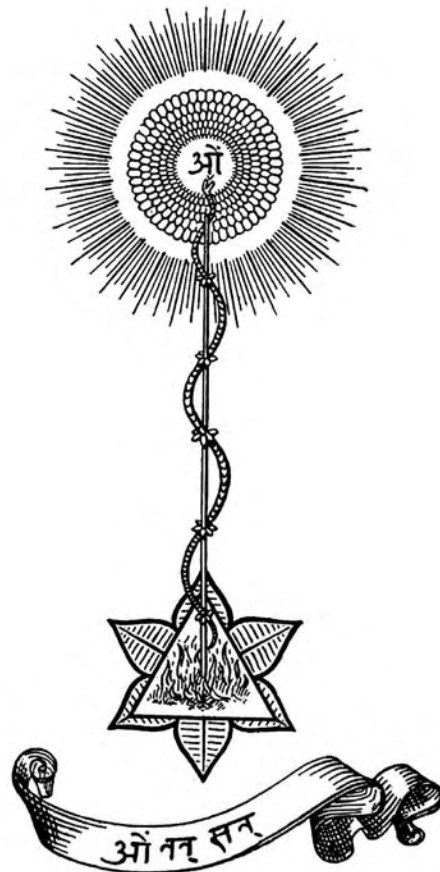
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TO OUR READERS

PRACTICE IS THE HALLMARK of religion. Without practical spirituality, religion is nothing but a bundle of rules, dogmas, texts, and rituals, which are much like the regimented garrisons of an army blindly following the dictates of their commander, all in an existential struggle to save their lives. It is only when the Divine becomes an experienced reality that religion becomes meaningful. In this age, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda gave us the simple message that religion is not about ratiocinations but about coming face to face with God.

Actualising spirituality starts with the spiritualising of the mind. Faith-traditions across the world have stressed upon the training of the mind. The religious across faith-traditions are discovering the subtle underpinnings of Maharishi Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, a text that continues to baffle and amaze spiritual aspirants and philosophers alike. In the recent decades, modern technology has enabled in-depth studies into the mind, the brain, and the process of meditation. The worldwide fascination with postural yoga has led to serious misunderstandings about ashtanga yoga.

With a view to present the main tenets of yoga philosophy and delineate some major perspectives

on this thought system, we bring you this issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* focussed on Patanjali's thought and its practice. Reputed scholars, both lay and monastic, try to understand the various implications of yoga and bring forth to us recent neurological and psychological research on the mind and meditation.

This year we bring to you a new column, *Young Eyes*. Through this column we would bring to the readers holistic perspectives from the youth on issues that are trending currently.

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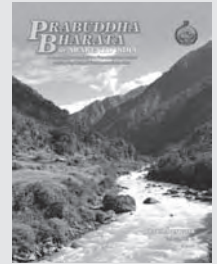
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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Yoga-Taravali of Acharya Shankara

January 2019
Vol. 124, No. 1

Translated by Swami Narasimhananda

आदिशंकराचार्यकृत योगतारावली

वन्दे गुरुणां चरणारविन्दे सन्दर्शितस्वात्मसुखावबोधे ।
जनस्य ये जाङ्गलिकायमाने संसारहालाहलमोहशान्त्यै ॥

॥ १ ॥

*Vande gurunam charanaravinde sandarshita-svatma-sukhavabodhe.
Janasya ye Jangalikayamane samsara-halabala-mohashantyai.*

(1)

I salute the lotus-feet of my guru that have experienced the knowledge and bliss of Atman, and that serve as a doctor for removing the delusion of people caused by the poison of samsara.

(1)

सदाशिवोक्तानि सपादलक्ष-लयावधानानि च सन्ति लोके ।
नादानुसंधानसमाधिमेकं मन्यामहे मान्यतमं लयानाम् ॥

॥ २ ॥

*Sada-shivoktani sapada-laksha-layavadhanani cha santi loke.
Nadanusandhana-samadhimekam manyamahe manyatamam layanam.*

(2)

In this world, there are one lakh and twenty-five thousand *laya*-yoga—the yoga of absorption in nature—meditations told by Lord Shiva. Of these, I consider the samadhi brought about by the meditation on the *anahata* sound to be the best.

(2)

सरेच-पूरैरनिलस्य कुम्भैः सर्वासु नाडीसु विशोधितासु ।
अनाहतादम्बुरुहादुदेति स्वात्मावगम्यः स्वयमेव बोधः ॥

॥ ३ ॥

Sarecha-purair-anilasya kumbhaih sarvasu nadisu vishodhitasu.
Anahataad-amburuhad-udeti svatma-avagamyah svayameva bodhab.

(3)

When by the *rechaka*, exhalation; *puraka*, inhalation; and *kumbhaka*, retention of air, all the *nadis*, channels for prana's flow, are purified, then knowledge rises of its own from the lotus of *anahata* chakra; this knowledge can only be known by oneself.

(3)

नादानुसन्धानं नमोऽस्तु तुभ्यं त्वां मन्महे तत्त्वपदं लयानाम् ।
भवत्प्रसादात्पवनेन साकं विलीयते विष्णुपदे मनो मे ॥

॥ ४ ॥

Nada-anusandhana namo'stu tubhyam tvam manmahe tattvapadam layanam.
Bhavat-prasadat-pavanena sakam viliyate vishnupade mano me.

(4)

O', meditation on the *anahata* sound, I salute you. I know that you are the ultimate goal among the *laya*-yogas. By your grace, my prana and mind get merged in the Lord's feet or the supreme state.

(4)

जालन्धरौड्ढ्यानकमूलबन्धान् जल्पन्ति कण्ठोदरपायुमूले ।
बन्धत्रयेऽस्मिन्परिचीयमाने बन्धः कुतो दारुणकालपाशैः ॥

॥ ५ ॥

Jalandhara-audhyana-kamulabandhan jalpanti kanthodara-payumule.
Bandha-traye'smin-parichiyamane bandhah kuto daruna-kalapashaih.

(5)

The *bandhakas*, energy locks, of *jalandhara*, *oddyana*, and *mula*, have to be practised respectively, in the throat, stomach, and the base of the anus. If one knows and practises these three energy locks well, how can the cruel noose of time bind one?

(5)

ओड्ढ्यान-जालन्धर-मूलबन्धै-रुन्निद्रितायामुरगाङ्गनायाम् ।
प्रत्यङ्मुखत्वात्प्रविशन्सुषुम्नां गमागमौ मुञ्चति गन्धवाहः ॥

॥ ६ ॥

Oddyana-jalandhara-mulabandhair-unnidritayam-uranga-anganayam.
Pratyang-mukhatvat-pravishan-sushumnam gama-agamau munchati gandhavabah.

(6)

When the energy locks of *oddyana*, *jalandhara*, and *mula* awaken the coiled-up serpent-woman, kundalini, then, the carrier of smell, air, moves downwards towards the *sushumna nadi*, and gives up its going out and coming in. (6)

उत्थापिताधारहुताशनोल्कै-राकुञ्चनैः शश्वदपानवायोः ।
सन्तापिताच्चन्द्रमसः स्रवन्ती पीयूषधारां पिबतीह धन्यः ॥

॥ ७ ॥

Utthapita-adhara-hutashan-olkair-akunchanai shashvad-apanavayoh.
Santapitach-chandramasah sravantim piyushadharam pibatih dhanyah. (7)

By the constant compression of *apana*, the outward-moving energy, a flame of fire comes out of the *muladhara* chakra. This fire heats the moon of the *sahasrara* chakra and the other moons or centres of *nadi* in the body. Blessed in this world is the sadhaka, who drinks the nectar that flows from this heated moon. (7)

बन्धत्रयाभ्यासविपाकजातां विवर्जितां रेचकपूरकाभ्याम् ।
विशोषयन्ती विषयप्रवाहं विद्यां भजे केवलकुम्भरूपाम् ॥

॥ ८ ॥

Bandha-traya-abhyasa-vipaka-jatam vivarjitam rechaka-purakabhyam.
Vishoshayantim vishaya-pravaham vidyam bhaje kevala-kumbha-rupam. (8)

I do the one-pointed practice of *kevala-kumbhaka* that arises out of the practice of the three energy locks mentioned earlier. This *kevala-kumbhaka* is devoid of *rechaka* and *puraka*, and it removes the disturbance in the sense organs caused by their contact with sense objects. (8)

अनाहते चेतसि सावधानै-रभ्यासशूरैरनुभूयमाना ।
संस्तम्भितश्वासमनःप्रचारा सा जृम्भते केवलकुम्भकश्रीः ॥

॥ ९ ॥

Anahata chetasi savadhanair-abhyasa-shurair-anubhuyamana.
Sanstambhita-shvasamanah prachara sa jrimbhate kevalakumbhaka-shrih. (9)

When the mind is fixed on the *anahata* chakra, then the actions of breathing and the mind are stopped. In this state, the splendour of *kevala-kumbhaka* is clearly seen. This splendour can be experienced by the alert and adept sadhakas. (9)

सहस्रशः सन्तु हठेषु कुम्भाः संभाव्यते केवलकुम्भ एव ।
कुम्भोत्तमे यत्र तु रेचपुरौ प्राणस्य न प्राकृतवैकृताख्यौ ॥

॥ १० ॥

*Sahasrashah santu hatheshu kumbhah sambhavyate kevala-kumbha eva.
Kumbhottame yatra tu rechapurau pranasya na prakrita-vainkritakhyau.*

(10)

Though thousands of *kumbhakas* are mentioned in the hatha yoga texts, only the *kevala-kumbhaka* has been acknowledged as the greatest, because in this greatest *kumbhaka*, prana's *rechaka*, also called *prakrita*; and prana's *puraka*, also called *vainkrita*; do not exist. (10)

त्रिकूटनाम्नि स्तिमितेऽन्तरङ्गे खे स्तम्भिते केवलकुम्भकेन ।
प्राणानिलो भानुशशाङ्कनाड्यौ विहाय सद्यो वलयं प्रयाति ॥

॥ ११ ॥

*Trikutanamni stimate'ntarange khe stambhite kevala-kumbhakena.
Prana-anilo bhanu-shashanka-nadyau vihaya sadyo valayam prayati.*

(11)

When the calm inner space called *trikuta* becomes still by *kevala-kumbhaka*, then prana leaves the solar *nadi, pingala*; and the lunar *nadi, ida*; and gets dissolved. (11)

प्रत्याहृतः केवलकुम्भकेन प्रबुद्धकुण्डल्युपभुक्तशेषः ।
प्राणः प्रतीचीनपथेन मन्दं विलीयते विष्णुपदान्तराले ॥

॥ १२ ॥

*Pratyahritah kevala-kumbhakena prabuddha-kundaly-upabhukta-sheshah.
Pranah pratichina-pathena mandam viliyate vishnupada-antarale.*

(12)

The prana—which remains after it is consumed by the awakened kundalini—is controlled by *kevala-kumbhaka*, and leaves by the downward path, and gradually gets merged in the feet of the Lord or in the supreme state. (12)

निरङ्कुशानां श्वसनोद्गमानां निरोधनैः केवलकुम्भकार्ख्यैः ।
उदेति सर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिशून्यो मरुल्लयः कोऽपि महामतीनाम् ॥

॥ १३ ॥

*Nirankushanam shvasanodgamanam nirodhanaih kevala-kumbhakakhyaih.
Udeti sarvendriya-vritti-shunyo marullayah ko'pi mahamatinam.*

(13)

Various restraints of the unchecked upward-motion of the breath are caused by *kevala-kumbhaka*. This causes a dissolution of air in some wise yogis. Such dissolution is free from all disturbances of the senses. (13)

न दृष्टिलक्ष्याणि न चित्तबन्धो न देशकालौ न च वातुरोधः ।
न धारणाध्यानपरिश्रमो वा समेधमाने सति राजयोगे ॥

॥ १४ ॥

Na drishti-lakshyani na chittabandho na deshakalau na cha vaturodhah.
Na dharana-dhyana-parishramo va samedhamane sati rajayoge. (14)

When raja yoga has properly developed, there is no need to focus upon goals; there is no need to control the mind; there is no need to observe the time and number of breath; there is no need to regulate the breath; and there is no need to put effort to attain concentration or meditation. (14)

अशेषदृश्योज्झितदृग्भयानामवस्थितानामिह राजयोगे ।
न जागरो नापि सुषुप्तिभावो न जीवितं नो मरणं विचित्रम् ॥

॥ १५ ॥

Ashesha-drishyoyjjhita-dringmayanam-avasthitanam-iba rajayoge.
Na jagaro napi sushuptibhavo na jivitam no maranam vichitram. (15)

Those who are established in raja yoga, are completely discarded by this manifested universe, and become one with Brahman. They have a strange state, without the states of waking and deep sleep; neither are they living nor dead. (15)

अहंममत्वादि विहाय सर्वं श्रीराजयोगे स्थिरमानसानाम् ।
न द्रष्टृता नास्ति च दृश्यभावः सा जृम्भते केवलसंविदेव ॥

॥ १६ ॥

Aham-mamatvadi vihaya sarvam shri-rajayoge sthira-manasanam.
Na drashtrita nasti cha drishyabhavah sa jrimbhate kevalasamvid-eva. (16)

Those who have given up the ideas of 'I' and 'mine' and always have a calm mind and are established in the great raja yoga, they do not have the moods of the seer or the seen, and in that state, consciousness alone is manifested. (16)

नेत्रे ययोन्मेषनिमेषशून्ये वायुर्यया वर्जितरेचपूरः ।
मनश्च संकल्पविकल्पशून्यं मनोन्मनी सा मयि सन्निधत्ताम् ॥

॥ १७ ॥

*Netre yayonmesha-nimesha-shunye vayur-yaya varjita-recha-purah.
Manashcha sankalpa-vikalpa-shunyam manonmani sa mayi sannidhattam.*

(17)

Let the evolved state of mind, *manonmani*, be present in me, in which state, there is no opening or closing of the eyes, the exhalation or inhalation of air stops, and the mind also becomes free of resolves and choices.

(17)

चित्तेन्द्रियाणां चिरनिग्रहेण श्वासप्रचारे शमिते यमीन्द्राः ।
निवातदीपा इव निश्चलाङ्गाः मनोन्मनीमग्नधियो भवन्ति ॥

॥ १८ ॥

*Chittendriyanam chira-nigrabena shvasa-prachare shamite yamindrah.
Nivata-dipa iva nishchalangah manonmanim-agnadhiyo bhavanti.*

(18)

The inhaling and exhaling of breath stops because of prolonged restraint of the mind and the senses. In this state, the limbs of great yogis become immobile like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. The intellects of such yogis gets merged in the evolved state of mind called *manonmani*.

(18)

उन्मन्यवस्थाधिगमाय विद्वन्नुपायमेकं तव निर्दिशामि ।
पश्यन्नुदासीनादृशा प्रपञ्चं संकल्पमुन्मूलय सावधानः ॥

॥ १९ ॥

*Unmany-avastha-adhigamaya vidvann-upayamam-ekam tava nirdishami.
Pashyann-udasina-drisha prapancham sankalpam-unmulaya savadhanah.*

(19)

O' learned one! I tell you a method to attain the evolved state of mind, *unmani*: be indifferent to this universe and uproot all resolves with alertness.

(19)

प्रसह्य संकल्पपरम्पराणां संचेदने सन्ततसावधानम् ।
आलम्बनाशादपचीयमानं शनैः शनैः शान्तिमुपैति चेतः ॥

॥ २० ॥

*Prasahya sankalpa-paramparanam sanchhedane santata-savadhanam.
Alambanashad-apachiyamanam shanaish shanaish shantimupaiti chetah.*

(20)

The mind that is constantly alert to forcefully destroy the chain of resolves in the mind, becomes free of distractions and attachment to sense objects due to the destruction of the basis of all thoughts; and gradually attains peace. (20)

निश्वासलोपैर्निभृतैः शरीरैर्नैत्राम्बुजैर्धनिमीलितैश्च ।
आविर्भवन्तीममनस्कमुद्रामालोकयामो मुनिपुङ्गवानाम् ॥

॥ २१ ॥

Nishvasa-lopair-nirbhritaih sharirair-netrambujair-ardha-nimilitaishcha.
Avirbhavantim-amanaska-mudram-alokayamo munipungavanam.

(21)

When there is a complete absence of breathing, immobility of the body, and the lotus of the eyes are in a half-open state, we see the manifestation of *amanaska*-mudra, the mindless-pose, in great sages. (21)

अमी यमीन्द्राः सहजामनस्का देहे ममत्वे शिथिलायमाने ।
मनोऽतिगं मारुतवृत्तिशून्यं गच्छन्ति भावं गगनावशेषम् ॥

॥ २२ ॥

Ami yamindrah sahajamanaska debe mamatve shithilayamane.
Mano'tigam maruta-vritti-shunyam gachchhanti bhavam gagana-avashesham.

(22)

The great yogis, whose identification with the body has weakened because of spontaneously attaining the state of *amanaska*, attain a state beyond the mind that has no disturbances of the prana, and is infinite and limitless like the sky. (22)

निवर्तयन्तीं निखिलेन्द्रियाणि प्रवर्तयन्तीं परमात्मयोगम् ।
संविन्मयीं तां सहजामवस्थां कदा गमिष्यामि गतान्यभावः ॥

॥ २३ ॥

Nivartayantim nikhilendriyani pravartayantim paramatmayogam.
Samvinmayim tam sahajam-avastham kada gamishyami gatanyabhavah.

(23)

When would I give up all the other states and attain that spontaneous state full of consciousness, which quietsens all the senses and leads towards the union with the supreme Self? (23)

प्रत्यग्विमर्शातिशयेन पुंसां प्राचीनसंगेषु पलायितेषु ।
प्रादुर्भवेत्काचिदजाड्यनिद्रा प्रपञ्चचिन्तां परिवर्जयन्ती ॥

॥ २४ ॥

*Pratyag-vimarsha-atishayena pumsam prachina-sangeshu palayiteshu.
Pradurbhavet-kachid-ajadya-nidra prapancha-chintam parivarjayanti.* (24)

Due to excellent reflection on the indwelling Self, the previous attachments of persons go away and they attain a state of conscious sleep, *yoga-nidra*, which makes them give up all thoughts of this universe. (24)

**विच्छिन्नसंकल्पविकल्पमूले निःशेषनिर्मूलितकर्मजाले ।
निरन्तराभ्यासनितान्तभद्रा सा जृम्भते योगिनि योगनिद्रा ॥** ॥ २५ ॥

*Vichchhinna-sankalpa-vikalpa-mule nihshesha-nirmulita-karmajale.
Nirantara-abhyasa-nitanta-bhadra sa jrimbhate yogini yoganidra.* (25)

By constant practice, the ever-benevolent *yoga-nidra*, appears in those yogis, whose resolves, choices, and the effects of actions have been completely uprooted. (25)

**विश्रान्तिमासाद्य तुरीयतत्त्वे विश्वाद्यवस्था-त्रितयोपरिस्थे ।
संविन्मयी कामपि सर्वकालं निद्रां सखे निर्विश निर्विकल्पाम् ॥** ॥ २६ ॥

*Vishrantim-asadya turiya-tattve vishvady-avastha-tritayoparisthe.
Samvinmayim kamapi sarvakalam nidram sakhe nirvisha nirvikalpam.* (26)

O' friend, getting convinced of and getting established in the state of *turiya*—which is beyond the three states of *vishva*, waking; *taijasa*, dreaming; and *prajna*, deep sleep—constantly experience the bliss of *yoga-nidra* that is full of consciousness, free from doubts, and inexplicable. (26)

**प्रकाशमाने परमात्मभानौ नश्यत्यविद्यातिमिरे समस्ते ।
अहो बुधा निर्मलदृष्टयोऽपि किञ्चिन्न पश्यन्ति जगत्समग्रम् ॥** ॥ २७ ॥

*Prakashamane paramatma-bhanau nashyaty-avidya-timire samaste.
Aho budha nirmala-drishhtayo'pi kinchinna pashyanti jagat-samagram.* (27)

Alas! When the sun of the supreme Self rises and the darkness of ignorance is completely

dispelled, though the knowers of Self have a pure vision, they are unable to see anything in this entire universe. (27)

सिद्धिं तथाविधमनोविलयां समाधौ श्रीशैलशृङ्गकुहरेषु कदोपलप्स्ये ।
गात्रं यदा मम लताः परिवेष्टयन्ति कर्णे यदा विरचयन्ति खगाश्च नीडम् ॥

॥ २८ ॥

*Siddhim tathavidha-manovilayam samadhau shrishaila-shringa-kuhareshu kadopalapsye.
Gatram yada mama latah pariveshtayanti karne yada virachayanti khagashcha nidam.* (28)

Staying in the cave of the Shrishailam mountain [a *jyotirlinga* temple of Shiva in Andhra Pradesh, India], when would I attain the perfection in samadhi that dissolves the mind, when creepers would entwine my body, and when birds would build their nests in my ears? (28)

ब्रह्मरन्ध्रगते वायौ गिरेः प्रस्रवणं भवेत् ।
शृणोति श्रवणातीतं नादं मुक्तिर्न संशयः ॥

॥ २९ ॥

*Brahma-randhra-gate vayau gireh prasravanam bhavet.
Shrinoti shravanatitam nadam muktirna sanshayah.* (29)

When the prana becomes stable at the *brahma-randhra*, the anterior fontanelle, consciousness flows like the flow from the top of a mountain. One hears the *anahata*-sound, which is beyond the range of hearing, and there is no doubt that one gets mukti. (29)



Yogapranatih

Swami Vedarthananda

स्वामीवेदार्थानन्दविरचिता योगप्रणतिः

निस्त्रैगुण्यमहासौधद्वारसोपानसन्ततिः ।

शुद्धसत्त्वमहाराजनगरीराजपद्धतिः ॥

श्रौतविद्यामणिद्वीपनौरसङ्गसभाविधिः ।

सर्वसौभाग्यशास्त्रार्थरत्नराशिमहोदधिः ॥

तत्त्ववैशारदीविद्यावित्तकामैर्विचक्षणै-

रुत्तमैरादृतो मार्गस्तस्मै योगाय वै नमः ॥

॥ १ ॥

Nistraigunya-mahasaudha-dvara-sopana-santatih.

Shuddha-sattva-maharaja-nagari-raja-paddhatih.

Shrauta-vidya-manidvipa-naurasanga-sabhaavidhibh.

Sarvasaubhagya-shastrartha-ratnarashi-mahodadhibh.

Tattvavaisharadi-vidya-vitta-kamair-vichakshanai-

ruttamairadrito margastasmai yogaya vai namah.

(1)

[Anushtup Metre] There is a palace beyond the three gunas; the series of steps leading up to the door of this palace is yoga. There is a king of a pure sattva nature. The royal road leading to the capital city of his kingdom is yoga. There is a jewel-island having the wisdom of Brahman as told in the Vedas and the Upanishads. The boat that takes us to this island is yoga. The method of practice of the group of unattached spiritual aspirants on the path to moksha is yoga. The ocean of the precious gems of the fortuitous teachings of the scriptures that give us moksha is yoga. The path taken by the great and astute people desirous of the great treasure of the knowledge of Self as propounded by Vachaspati in his commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, called *Tattva-vaisharadi*, is yoga. I salute this yoga. (1)

बिलाद्वल्लरीमार्गमूलाद्भुजङ्गः प्रयानूर्ध्वमुत्फुल्लयन् पद्मजालम् ।

महापद्ममध्ये प्रमोदं प्रभुज्य प्रबोधे निषण्णः प्रविश्यान्तरालम् ॥

॥ २ ॥

Bilad-vallari-margamulad-bhujangah prayan-urdhvam-utphullayan padmajalam.

Mahapadma-madhye pramodam prabhujya prabodhe nishannah pravishya-antaralam.

(2)

[Bhujangaprayatam Metre] Sri Ramakrishna saw in a vision that kundalini in the form of a coiled serpent, moves up, from its burrow of the *muladhara* chakra, through the lotus creeper

of *sushumna*, travels through the lotus-web of the chakras such as *manipura*, gets developed and reaches the great lotus of the *sahasrara*, enters into it, enjoys the bliss of *kaivalya*, and experiences the knowledge of Brahman. (2)

सहस्रारं सर्पः प्रसरतु सुखं प्रदददचिरात् ।
सहास्मत्संसारप्रसरमलिनेनापसरता ॥

॥ ३ ॥

Sahasraram sarpah prasaratu sukham pradadadachirat.
Sahasmat-samsara-prasara-malinena-apasarata.

(3)

[*Shikharini* Metre] May that serpent, kundalini, give us bliss by removing the dirt of the expansion of worldliness in us and moving up to the *sahasrara*, simultaneously destroying all worldly bondage. (3)

असंख्यैः सांख्यैरमरनरपूज्यैरविरतं वियोगो यो योगो विरतमतिमद्भिः परिचितः ।
उपायोऽपायेभ्यो जनिमृतिशतेभ्योऽजनि न चेद् उपेये योगः स्यादुपनिषदुपात्ते परतरे ॥

॥ ४ ॥

Asankhyeyaih sankhyair-amara-nara-pujyair-aviratam viyogo yo yogo virata-matimadbhih parichitah.
Upayo'payebhyo janimriti-shatebhyo'jani na ched upeye yogah syad-upanishad-upatte paratare. (4)

[*Shikharini* Metre] The many great followers of Sankhya, who practise the separation of Prakriti and Purusha, as propounded by Patanjali's yoga, adopt the means to get rid of the numerous births and deaths. Yoga is one of the means of knowing the Brahman, which is talked of in the Upanishads. (4)

यमो यो लोकानां नियमनकरो यश्च मनसां यथायोग्यं यस्मिन्निदमखिलमास्तेऽप्रतिहतम् ।
यतः प्राणायामः प्रचलति विनाऽस्मत्प्रयतनं जगद्यश्च प्रत्याहरति लघु लीलाविलसनम् ॥
सदा भूतग्रामं भरति परितो धारयति यः समस्तं न्यस्तानामविषयतया ध्यानविषयः ।
समेषामाधीनां समधिकसमाधिश्च भगवान्स नोऽष्टाङ्गो योगो युजि परमहंसो विजयते ॥

॥ ५ ॥

Yamo yo lokanam niyamanakaro yashcha manasam
yathayogyam yasminn idam akhila-maste'pratihata-m.
Yatah pranayamah prachalati vina'smat-prayatanam
jagadyashcha pratyaharati laghu lilavilasanam.
Sada bhutagramam bharati parito dharayati yah
samastam nyastanam-avishayataya dhyana-vishayah.
Sameshamadbinam samadhika-samadhishcha bhagavan
sa no'shtango yogo yuji paramahamso vijayate.

(5)

[*Shikharini* Metre] He is the destroyer of this universe, *yama*. He is the indwelling restraint of all beings, *niyama*. He is the supreme Soul, in whom resides this universe, *asana*. He is the reason for our involuntary breathing, *pranayama*. He takes back his creation and divine play in involution, *pratyahara*. He creates and sustains the universe, *dharana*. He is the object of all-renouncing monks' meditation, *dhyana*. He is the solution for all the sufferings, *samadhi*. Glory to Sri Ramakrishna, who is the embodiment of ashtanga yoga in this age. (5)

विषयक्रीडाविभवाद्विरज्य बन्धून् विसृज्य मातरिति
प्रयुज्य मृतिमालिन्याद् वियुज्य यामुत सुतः समाप्नोति
प्रभज्य भयसंदेहं तदङ्कपङ्केरुहेण योगं यामि ॥

॥ ६ ॥

*Vishayakrida-vibhavadvirajya bandhun visrijya matariti
Prayujya mritimalinyad viyujya yamuta sutah samapnoti
Prabhajya bhayasandeham tadankapankerubena yogam yami.* (6)

[*Dandakhandah* Metre] When one gives up the means of sense enjoyments and relationships in the world, and constantly remembers the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, she removes the dirt of repeated births and deaths and takes her children on her lap. I move towards that yoga, which is attaining the lotus of the lap of Sri Sarada Devi that removes all doubts and fears. (6)

चतुर्योगसरिद्धारासमन्वयपयोनिधिम्।
परमाचार्यपरिधिं प्रणौमि स्वामिसन्निधिम् ॥

॥ ७ ॥

*Chaturyogasariddhara-samanvaya-payonidhim.
Paramacharya-paridhim pranaumi svami-sannidhim.* (7)

[*Anushtup* Metre] I prostrate before Swami Vivekananda, who is the ocean, where the four rivers of jnana, bhakti, raja, and karma yogas, meet in harmony. (7)



Yoga: The Technology of Mind Management

THE MIND IS THE KEY TO EVERYTHING. Without the mind, we cannot accomplish anything. All our sense organs need the mind to complete the process of gathering information or knowledge from the outside world. The human mind is indeed a fine instrument. But, this is only the positive side. When one tries to use the mind effectively to carry out the tasks necessary to evolve in human life, there comes an obstacle that is as powerful as the instrument with which the task is being done: the mind. So, in a masterly stroke of creation, we have been given a faculty that is both the instrument and the impediment. To handle this is an exponential form of handling nuclear energy; if channelised properly, one can do wonders, and if mishandled, disasters can ensue.

Humankind has devised and continues to devise various ways to train and manage the mind. Most of these methods look for symptoms of illness of the mind and venture to correct or cure them. This is a symptomatic approach much like many branches of medicine. The problem with this approach is that the mind itself is considered to be healthy in its natural state and the need for changing its ways arises only when things have become unmanageable or when there is some sign of malady of the mind. However, it does not seem wise to take for granted the natural state of the mind. Many spiritual and philosophical traditions have found the answer to the problem of the mind, that the mind itself is the problem. Instead of waiting for it to display signs of illness, it is wise to make the mind incapable of

displaying anything! It is because the mind displays imaginary projections onto the reality that is Brahman, that we suffer constantly; sometimes

The practice of yoga is a universal spiritual practice free from any need for beliefs.

we call this outwardly as suffering, sometimes we fool ourselves to think that it is happiness. This suffering is what leads a human being to pursue religion, to find a way out of all suffering. This, one does by the help of the mind, without realising that the mind is the root of all suffering. The key to understanding why the mind is the cause of all suffering is to first understand that the mind is the one that gives us false images of certainty and perfection in a mirage of the world, where there can never be either of those.


While René Descartes famously said, 'I think, therefore I am', the reality appears to be quite different: 'I think, therefore I am not what I think myself to be.' Among the many great sages, who realised this truth, was Maharishi Patanjali, who wrote the great treatise on yoga philosophy, the *Yoga Sutra*. The cause of all problems, according to him, are thoughts that cause disturbances or waves in the mind. But, the mind derives its existence from thoughts. Therefore, the eradication of thoughts means the eradication of mind. When we remove the projector that is the mind, we can see the white screen that is the true reality, Brahman. No more projections, no more variegated hues of the vain dreams of happiness and suffering, no more hopes and aspirations

leading to dejections and frustrations. This is what yoga does.

To follow the spiritual path of yoga, one need not necessarily believe in the tenets of yoga philosophy. It is needless to mention that it is imperative to have a trained mind for one's spiritual life. And so, irrespective of the particular spiritual path a person is following, it is necessary to control the mind, for attaining excellence in that path. So, whether you are a bhakta or a jnani, whether you follow the path of selfless work or that of psychic control, you have to necessarily have an excellent control of the mind; and naturally one has to follow ashtanga yoga to attain that control. Thus, the practice of yoga is a universal spiritual practice. One does not need to believe in any philosophy or godhead to practise this path. It is the perfect technology of mind management.

The apparent conflict between spiritual practices and scriptural or philosophical study has been discussed for centuries, probably from the beginning of human pursuits into one's spiritual nature. The need for studies becomes clear when the need for testing one's progress in ashtanga yoga is felt. Much like the highway signs that tell us about the status of our travel, or in the present-day context, much like the mobile map applications that guide us through our journeys, studies of philosophical and scriptural treatises enable us to understand our spiritual progress and to benchmark it with what have been detailed as goalposts for the spiritual aspirant. In the present-day context, however, it does not suffice to study traditional philosophical and scriptural texts, as human advances in technology have made it possible to study the human mind in a very detailed and minute manner. To those who ask the almost cliché question of what use do such studies bring, the answer is that they help the spiritual aspirant to sift the essential from the non-essential.

For instance, there is a great aspiration among the spiritual aspirants to attain glamorous supranormal powers. This is where the study of science, particularly the study of neurology, helps. Neuroscientists have proved by experiments that the physical expression of bliss, as told by numerous sages, can be produced by passing a very small and regulated amount of electrical current in a particular part of the brain. However, this physical bliss, though deceptively akin to the experience of the God-realised souls, does not bring any transformation in the person's psyche, making one as ignorant of one's true reality as before this 'bliss'. This knowledge itself gives clarity and takes one's mind off the preoccupation with the physical expressions of spiritual realisations. The same is true with the phenomenon of astral projection or out-of-body travel. Neuroscientists have proven that patients having some lesions in particular parts of the brain experience such out-of-body movements, which have been later empirically verified to be true. So, what many people still think to be something very spiritual or yogic, turns out to be none of these, because they are only grounded in the physical body.

Modern psychology coupled with Indian psychology, particularly as explained by Patanjali, helps one to better understand the workings of the mind. This is necessary for us to maintain our focus on the realisation of our true nature and not be carried away with glorious accounts of siddhis or supranormal powers, which Sri Ramakrishna saw, in a vision, to be the excreta of a disdainful person, something to be abhorred. That is quite contrary, in fact diametrically opposite, to the spontaneous bliss of thoughtlessness or mindlessness, which is characterised as never-ending bliss in a state that cannot be perceived by the mind, and that cannot be expressed by words. 



Meditation on Sri Ramakrishna's Mind

Swami Chetanananda

WHAT IS NECESSARY for practising meditation? A pure mind. We don't meditate with our bodies or senses. We meditate with a concentrated, one-pointed mind. What is this mind? What does it do? Where does it dwell? Happiness and misery, bondage and liberation are all in the mind. It is very important to understand the mind. We see our bodies and experience the function of our senses, but the mind is incomprehensible to us. At the same time, we think with the mind; we are human, so we are capable of thought. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that one who is aware

of one's conscious self is a human being. This awareness is the awakened living mind.

According to Vedanta, mind-intellect-memory-ego, *antahkarana*, originated from the *sattvic* aspects of the five *bhutas*, rudimentary elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth. The four *antahkaranas*, inner instruments originated from *sattva*, so they are pure and transparent. The mind thinks in pairs of opposites. The intellect makes decisions. Memory or *chitta*, remembers. The ego establishes relationships of 'I' and 'mine'. When pure consciousness is reflected on these inner instruments, it becomes the *jivatma*, the individual self. It then functions in the human body as the doer and enjoyer.

Some people think that the mind and

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intellect are conscious, but they are produced from maya, and are insentient matter. The rays of the sun may fall on a stone and a mirror, but it is reflected only in the mirror. When the sun is reflected in a mirror, it looks luminous, and children can play with the reflected light. The mirror does not generate its own light but instead reflects the light of the sun. Similarly, the human mind functions by means of the consciousness of the Atman.

‘Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intelligence, and fear—all this is truly the mind.’¹ The mind functions in the waking and dreaming states, but dissolves in ignorance during deep sleep, which proves that the mind is not real because it does not exist in all three states. This moving and unmoving world are perceived by the mind. When the mind becomes functionless, that is, without thought waves or *vrittis*, it does not perceive duality. The mind is the product of maya; when maya ceases to exist for a person, the dualistic world vanishes. In the *Maniratnamala*, Acharya Shankara writes: ‘Who has conquered the world? The person who has conquered the mind.’²

The Atman reigns in the human body and dwells in the heart like a king. The mind is the prime minister and the sense organs are the workers. The king appoints the minister to administer his kingdom. The minister collects information from his workers and presents it to the king. This is the way the human system functions. The king, the Atman, silently observes everything without becoming involved.

The position of the mind in the human body is inscrutable. Sometimes the mind is inside, sometimes outside, sometimes near, and sometimes far away. Where does the mind dwell? In this respect, different schools of philosophy have different viewpoints. According to the school

of Nyaya, the school of logicians, the mind is located in the head. The organs of knowledge are in the head and the mind also is an organ of knowledge; in fact, it is the gate of all knowledge. The Nyaya school posits that the mind is eternal and formless. Because it is formless, it was not created. It does not expand or contract.

According to Sankhya philosophy, the mind is not eternal; it is a created object. The mind exists until a *jiva*, individual soul, attains liberation. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* testifies that the mind has a form—were this not so, it could not connect with other objects. The sage Uddalaka told Shvetaketu that the mind is made of food.³ Therefore, according to Sankhya, the mind has a form. It is destructible, but not so easily. Because it originated from primordial nature, the mind dwells in each human body; it cannot be destroyed without attaining liberation.

According to the Yoga school of Patanjali: ‘Concentration may be attained by fixing the mind upon the inner light, which is beyond sorrow.’⁴ There is an eight-petalled lotus in the heart chakra, *anahata* chakra, that is the dwelling place of the mind. When one meditates on the effulgent light of the supreme there, one’s mind becomes luminous.

It is truly a wonder how deeply our ancient sages and the authors of the scriptures thought. They realised the transcendental truth and left their experiences for us. According to the tantras and Puranas, the position of the mind is between the eyebrows. This is called the *ajna* chakra. When the mind is concentrated here, it thinks, the nerves of the brain begin to vibrate, and our eyes, ears, and other sense organs begin to function. However, Vedic teachers hold different opinions regarding the location of the mind. Some think it is in the brain and some think it is in the heart. Vidyananda says in the *Panchadashi*: ‘The mind, the ruler of the ten organs

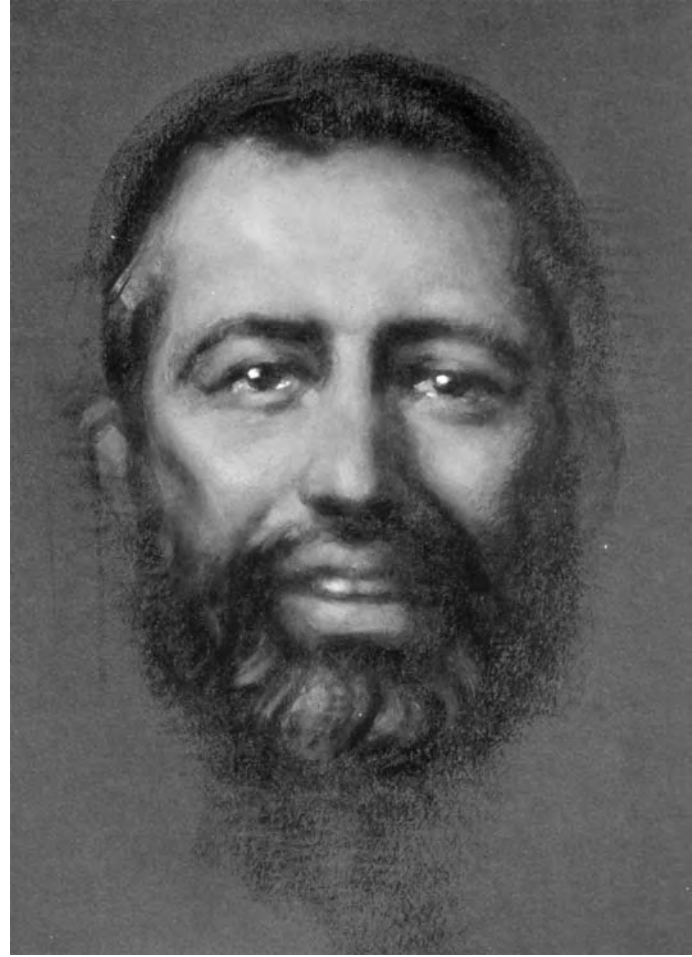
of knowledge and action, is situated within the lotus of the heart.⁵

Sri Ramakrishna gave a wonderful solution to the problem of where the mind dwells: 'The seat of the mind is between the eyebrows.'⁶ When he was asked: 'Where shall I meditate on God ... ?' (233). He answered: 'The heart is a splendid place. Meditate on God there' (ibid.). We meditate with our minds. During meditation, the mind becomes calm and rests in the heart or merges into samadhi, stopping the thought waves. When we are working, the mind stays in the brain and through its willpower commands the senses to function. We understand from Sri Ramakrishna's words that the mind's resting place is in the heart and its office is in the head. In addition, the mind can go inside or outside of the body, or anywhere else. The minds of worldly people move in the lower sensual plane, whereas the yogi's pure mind travels in a higher spiritual realm.

The mind of an ordinary person jumps around like a mad elephant. The minds of most people are busy with lust and gold. Sri Ramakrishna described how the mind of the spiritual aspirant rises into the higher realm:

There is much similarity between the seven 'planes' described in the Vedanta and the six 'centres' of Yoga. The first three planes of the Vedas may be compared to the first three Yogic centres, namely, Muladhara, Svadhisthana, and Manipura. With ordinary people the mind dwells in these three planes, at the organs of evacuation and generation and at the navel. When the mind ascends to the fourth plane, the centre designated in Yoga as Anahata, it sees the individual soul as a flame. Besides, it sees light. At this the aspirant cries: 'Ah! What is this? Ah! What is this?'

When the mind rises to the fifth plane, the aspirant wants to hear only about God. This is the Visuddha centre of Yoga. The sixth plane and the centre known by the yogi as Ajna are



one and the same. When the mind rises there, the aspirant sees God. But still there is a barrier between God and the devotee. It is like the barrier of glass in a lantern, which keeps one from touching the light. King Janaka used to give instruction about Brahmajñana from the fifth plane. Sometimes he dwelt on the fifth plane, and sometimes on the sixth.

After passing the six centres the aspirant arrives at the seventh plane. Reaching it, the mind merges in Brahman. The individual soul and the Supreme Soul become one. The aspirant goes into samadhi. His consciousness of the body disappears. He loses the knowledge of the outer world. He does not see the manifold anymore. His reasoning comes to a stop (245).

Sri Ramakrishna's Mind

We generally meditate on Sri Ramakrishna's form and *lila*, divine play. Very few people

meditate on his mind. Our minds are impure, limited, and full of desires and doubts, whereas Sri Ramakrishna's mind was pure, cosmic, and free from desires and doubts. So it is almost impossible to comprehend Sri Ramakrishna's mind.

We do not stop at seeing the external form of a person whom we love; we want to see her or his inner qualities. Otherwise, we cannot know that person fully. In *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, Swami Saradananda minutely analyses various aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's mind, which will be the object of our reflection and meditation. Observing the constitution, movements, and actions of the Master's divine mind, we shall be able to rectify the shortcomings of our minds during meditation. The Master reassured us: 'I cast the mould, you put your mind into it and shape yourselves accordingly.'⁷

1. **Sri Ramakrishna's desireless mind** • There is no end to human desires. They come one after another. The desire for money replaces the desire for lust, and again that desire is replaced by the desire for name and fame. These three desires—name and fame, wealth, and procreation—have thoroughly bound human beings. In contrast, the Master's mind was free from desires. He cautioned the devotees to be careful about worldly desires: 'Is it so easy to take refuge in God? Inscrutable are the workings of Mahamaya, the great enchantress! Does She free anyone so easily? A person who has no relatives, She entangles in this world with a pet cat. That poor person collects fish and milk from here and there and says: "What can I do? The cat won't eat anything but fish and milk"' (163).

2. **Sri Ramakrishna's memory** • The Master could remember anything that he heard even once. He had a fantastic memory. During his boyhood, after watching a *yatra*, an outdoor play, about Sri Rama or Sri Krishna, he would teach the lines for different roles from the plays

to his friends, and they would perform the entire play in Manik Raja's mango orchard. The village farmers were amazed when they attended that play, and they wondered how it was possible to memorise the dialogue and songs just by hearing the play once.

Nowadays singers put a music book in front of them and sing the songs. Sri Ramakrishna learned 182 songs just by hearing each one once. Once Mahendranath Gupta, M., related an incident to the Master that he had told to Pandit Padmalochan, but the Master corrected M., saying that he had said that to Bamandas of Ulo. At Shyampukur, the Master

asked one of the devotees to sing a song by the great devotee Ramprasad that begins with 'Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is? Even the six philosophies are powerless to reveal Her.' While listening to the song, from time to time the Master explained the gist of the song's words to the doctor [Dr Mahendra Lal Sarkar] in a low voice. When the singer sang the last line as, 'But while my heart has understood, alas! my mind has not', the Master interrupted him, saying: 'That is incorrect; please reverse the words. It ought to be, "But while my mind has understood, alas! my heart has not". While trying to know Him, the mind easily understands that it cannot comprehend the beginningless and endless God. But the heart is reluctant to admit this; it constantly feels that it can realize God (886).

3. **Sri Ramakrishna's resolute mind** • The Master always kept his word. He never deviated from truth. When he was nine years old, he promised Dhani, the blacksmith woman who was his god-mother, that he would receive his first alms from her during the sacred thread ceremony rather than his own mother, which was the custom. He kept his promise during that initiation, going against the wishes of his family members, and defying social customs and traditions.

During his early years, he said that he did not want to pursue a bread-winning education. He stopped going to school. When he was seventeen, his elder brother took him to Calcutta and tried to give him a standard education, but failed to interest him in it.

4. Sri Ramakrishna's brave mind • There was an inn at the southeast corner of Kamarpukur village that belonged to the Laha family. On the way to Puri, many monks and pilgrims would stop there to rest for a few days. It was said that itinerant monks sometimes kidnapped young boys, so the village boys always stayed away from the monks. But young Gadadhar, the maiden name of Sri Ramakrishna, fearlessly served those monks by bringing them wood for cooking and water to drink. Those monks taught him devotional songs and shared their food with him.

Much later, during his sadhana, Sri Ramakrishna would practise meditation in the deep jungle of the Panchavati at Dakshineswar, which was infested with snakes and known to be

haunted. With the intent of stopping him from going there, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew Hriday would throw stones around him to try to frighten him, but Sri Ramakrishna was not deterred.

When Sri Ramakrishna was in Kamarpukur, he would go to the cremation grounds near Bhuti's Canal and Budhui Moral at night to meditate. In the dead hours of night, his brother Rameswar would go there in search of him and loudly call for him. Sri Ramakrishna would shout back from a distance to warn him: 'All right, Brother, I'm coming. But don't come any nearer—the spirits might harm you' (243).

5. Sri Ramakrishna's fun-loving mind • Some people think that a monk or a holy person should be grave and serious. But the Master was a humorous and joyful person, as this story shows:

Many uneducated people of the village were unable to read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In order to hear the epics they would invite to their homes a brahmin or an educated man of their community who could read and explain the texts to them. When the reader

Budhui Moral Cremation Ground in Kamarpukur



arrived, people would wash his feet, offer him tobacco in a new hubble-bubble [water pipe], and give him a good seat or a new mat to sit on for the reading. Thus honoured, it would sometimes happen that the reader became puffed up with pride. The sharp-witted Gadadhar observed how the reader would haughtily occupy an elevated platform in front of the audience and express his own superiority by reciting the verses, using an affected tone and making various odd gestures. Later, the fun-loving Gadadhar would amuse people by mimicking that egotistical reader amidst their peals of laughter (175).

The Master could laugh loudly and enjoyed making others laugh. One could write a book on his humour. In many places in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we find 'all laugh' and 'laughter'. The Master's face wore a blissful sweet smile.

6. Sri Ramakrishna's natural characteristics • Saradananda wrote the following:

By studying stories of the Master's early life we understand the kind of mind he had when he began his spiritual disciplines. He accomplished whatever he set out to do; he never forgot anything he heard; he shunned forcefully and immediately any obstacle that prevented him from reaching his goal. We see that he performed all actions in this world by placing his firm faith in God, in himself, and in the innate divine nature of all people. He could not accept any idea tinged with even the slightest narrowness, nor could he bear any low, impure thoughts. Purity, love, and compassion guided him always in every respect. We realize that this aspirant's mind could not be deceived by its own thoughts, nor could it be deceived by others. Keeping before us the characteristics of the Master's mind, we shall be able to comprehend the uniqueness of his life as a spiritual aspirant (175).

7. Sri Ramakrishna's devout mind • Sri Ramakrishna's father, Kshudiram, was absolutely truthful and a devout brahmana. During his childhood,

Gadadhar observed how his father strictly observed his food practices and brahmanical customs, and how he was devoted to worship and spiritual disciplines. After his father's death, Gadadhar was invested with the sacred thread and began to worship their family deity with great sincerity. When the Dakshineswar temple was dedicated, Gadadhar ate puffed rice instead of partaking of the prasada of the temple because it belonged to a non-brahmana. Afterwards, he used Ganges water to cook his own food. Only later did he begin to eat the cooked prasada of the Divine Mother. Observance of strict food habits and steadfast disciplines enhances devotion in spiritual life. In the *Gospel*, Sri Ramakrishna eulogised the steadfast devotion of the *gopis* and of Hanuman.

8. Sri Ramakrishna's faith-filled mind • Sri Ramakrishna had the faith of a little child. According to the scriptures, if a person meditates under an *amalaki* tree with a particular wish, that wish comes true. With that faith, the Master began to practise meditation under the *amalaki* tree near the Panchavati, after removing his cloth and sacred thread. He told Hriday: 'One should meditate by becoming free from all ties. From their very birth, human beings are tied with eight fetters: hatred, shame, family status, good conduct, fear, fame, pride of caste, and ego' (207-8). Our minds oscillate between faith and doubt, so it is hard for us to comprehend the Master's steadfastly guileless mind. He said:

Ah, what a state of mind I passed through! One day something bit me while I was sitting in the grass. I was afraid it might have been a snake, and I didn't know what to do. I had heard that if a snake bites you again immediately after its first bite, it takes back its own venom. At once I set out to discover the hole so that I might let the snake bite me again. While I was searching, a man said to me, 'What are you doing?' After listening to my story, he said, 'But the snake must bite in the very same place it has bitten

before.' Thereupon I went away. Perhaps I had been bitten by a scorpion or some other insect.

I had heard from Ramlal that the autumn chill was good for one's health. Ramlal had quoted a verse to support it. One day, as I was returning from Calcutta in a carriage, I stuck my head out of the window so that I might get all the chill. Then I fell ill. (*All laugh.*)⁸

As we contemplate these stories of the Master, sometimes we are struck with wonder and sometimes with mirth. To create faith in the devotees' minds, the Master narrated many of his life experiences and parables.

9. Sri Ramakrishna's independent mind • Sri Ramakrishna never flattered anybody to get a job as a priest; instead, he was selected because he made a beautiful image of Shiva. When Mathuranath Biswas, the owner of the Kali temple, saw Sri Ramakrishna's image of Shiva, he requested Ramkumar to prevail upon his brother to accept a position as priest in the temple. However, Ramkumar knew the nature of his brother; no one could force him to do anything. At that time Hriday came to Dakshineswar for a job. One day, Mathur called for Sri Ramakrishna, but Sri Ramakrishna already knew what was in Mathur's mind. He told Hriday: 'I have no desire to be tied down to a job for life. In particular, if I agree to perform worship here, I'll be put in charge of the goddess's ornaments. This worries me. It is not possible for me to accept that responsibility. However, if you were to take responsibility for the ornaments, I would then have no objection to performing the worship.'⁹

When Mathur heard of Sri Ramakrishna's intention, he agreed to his proposal. Ramkumar was also happy. However, the Master could not perform the worship for long. When he was in a god-intoxicated mood, he could not work. Mathur then appointed Hriday to be a priest of the Kali temple.

Jadu Mallick, a wealthy devotee, heard that the Master had a problem eating the late lunch from the Kali temple, so he engaged a cook named Sudhamukhi for him. After three days, the Master said in a humorous Bengali couplet: 'Sudhamukhi's cooking; no more, no more. When I eat, I cry.' He realised that he would lose his freedom if he continued accepting this service from Jadu, because whenever Jadu called for him, he would be obliged to comply. So he released Jadu's cook.

10. Sri Ramakrishna's poetic mind • There is no rule that says a person becomes a poet only by writing poems. The Sanskrit word for poet, *kavi*, also means seer of truth or the creator of something wonderful. Rabindranath Tagore addressed Emperor Shahjahan as 'emperor of poets' because he was the creator of the Taj Mahal, a wonder of the world. Achintya Sen-gupta, a famous Bengali novelist, wrote a book

Jadu Mallick



titled *Kavi Ramakrishna* in which he described Sri Ramakrishna's poetic characteristics. For example, Sengupta writes that the Master's sense of beauty was unparalleled and that his creative and artistic abilities manifested in his conversation, singing, dancing, painting, and so on.

With a view to teaching the highest truths to the world, the creator created the rishis of the Upanishads, who were poets transcending the ordinary human minds. From this perspective, Sri Ramakrishna was a rishi-poet. Undoubtedly, Sri Ramakrishna's words represent the new Upanishads.

11. Sri Ramakrishna's student mind • It is said that only a good student can be a good teacher. Sri Ramakrishna was a great learner. Although he had only a rudimentary school education, from his elder brother he learned how to read *Sri Sri Chandi* and to perform the worship of Mother Kali and other deities at Dakshineswar.

Before he began to worship Mother Kali, however, he took initiation in the shakti tradition from Kenaram Bhattacharya. During Sri Ramakrishna's sadhana, he took initiation into tantra from Bhairavi Brahmani and into Vedanta from Totapuri. In addition, he continuously learned from nature, from his surroundings, and from both good and bad people. One of his famous sayings is: 'Friends, as long as I live, so long do I learn' (887). Sri Ramakrishna's main teacher was the Divine Mother. Failing to understand his own divine mood, he prayed to the Divine Mother: 'What is happening to me? Am I on the right track?' He supplicated the Divine Mother with a longing heart: 'Mother, I don't understand. Why am I in this situation? Please make me do what I am supposed to do and teach me what I am supposed to learn. Hold me close to You all the time' (218).

12. Sri Ramakrishna's guileless mind • There was no deceit or 'theft in the chamber of his heart' in Sri Ramakrishna (296). His body, mouth, and mind worked in harmony. He told his disciples: 'Whatever one should renounce or accept, one should do it with body, mind, and speech equally. Only then will a spiritual aspirant be worthy of God-realization' (210).

During his sadhana, he observed three main obstacles to God-realisation: lust, money, and vanity. The moment his mind determined every woman to be the Divine Mother, his body and senses immediately accepted this one hundred per cent. As soon as he realised that the Divine Mother dwells in all women in the world, his lust for women disappeared. Recognising that attachment for money is an obstacle, he held a rupee in one hand and a lump of clay in the other, and then saying, 'money is clay and clay is money', he threw both into the Ganges. From then on he could never touch money. To get rid of vanity, he cleaned the open sewer drain at the



house of the sweeper Rasik and washed the toilet at the Kali temple, wiping it with his long hair. He thus destroyed his pride in being a brahmana. The Master taught through his life and not merely through words.

13. Sri Ramakrishna's self-controlled mind: Saradananda described how Sri Ramakrishna tested his self-control:

One day while Sarada was massaging the Master's feet, she asked him, 'How do you look upon me?' The Master replied: 'The same Mother who is in the temple, the same Mother who gave birth to this body and is now living in the nahabat, that same Mother is now rubbing my feet. Truly, I always see you as a form of the blissful Divine Mother.'

One night as he watched Sarada lying asleep beside him, the Master began to discriminate, addressing his own mind: 'O my mind, this is the body of a woman. Men look on it as an object of great enjoyment and they always lust after it. But if one possesses this body, one must remain confined within the flesh; one can't realize God. O my mind, let there be no theft [hypocrisy] in your inner chamber. Don't be thinking one thing [inwardly] and pretending another outwardly! Be honest—do you want this woman's body, or do you want God? If you want the body, here it is in front of you. Enjoy it.' Discriminating in this way, the Master was about to touch Sarada's body when his mind suddenly recoiled and lost itself so deeply in samadhi that he did not regain normal consciousness all night. The next morning after considerable difficulty he was brought back to the conscious plane when the Lord's name was repeated in his ear (349).

14. Sri Ramakrishna's divine mind • Our minds are out of control, drunk on worldly intoxicants. When we sit for meditation, our minds become restless like a restless monkey that has been stung by hornets. We are not the masters of our minds, but rather the slaves. The

Master was the master of his mind. Whatever orders he gave his mind, it obeyed. Later the Master told his disciples how his mind and body functioned during meditation:

There is an image of Bhairava [a form of Shiva] in meditation on the parapet of the natmandir in front of the Kali temple. While going to the temple to meditate, I would point to that image and tell my mind, 'You must meditate on the Mother like that motionless statue'. No sooner did I sit down to meditate than I would hear clattering sounds in all of my joints, beginning in my legs. It was as if someone inside me were turning keys to lock me up, joint by joint. I was powerless to move my body or change my posture, even slightly. I couldn't stop meditating, or leave the temple, or do anything else I wanted. I was forced to sit in that posture until my joints began clattering again and were unlocked, this time beginning at my neck and ending in my legs (214).

15. Sri Ramakrishna's dynamic mind: The scriptures say that the goddess of fortune helps an active person. A man with a lazy and unfocused mind cannot complete a project after starting it. He blames everyone, even the gods, for his failure. Saradananda wrote:

The Master's energetic mind could not leave any work half done. This characteristic of his was as manifest in the subtle realm of the spirit as it was in the gross material realm. Because of this natural proclivity, if his mind became filled with an idea, he could not rest until he had explored it to its ultimate limit. Studying this aspect of his nature some readers may ask: 'But is this good? Is it beneficial for a person to pursue any idea that arises at any time and become its puppet?' Although the Master's nature did not lead him astray, his behaviour in this respect should not be followed by most people. Positive and negative thoughts constantly arise in weak human minds. It is not prudent for ordinary people to have such faith in themselves so as to believe that only good

thoughts will arise in their minds. Therefore, it should be everyone's duty to harness powerful ideas with the rein of self-control (276).

16. Sri Ramakrishna's mind as the guru: In this ocean of worldly enjoyment, our minds harass us continuously and we gasp for a little relief. Saradananda described how the Master's mind would guide him like a guru:

A spiritual aspirant becomes pure by controlling the mind completely through constant practice of detachment and self-control. The Master used to say that one's very mind then becomes one's guru. Whatever thought waves arise in a pure mind lead the aspirant quickly to the goal rather than leading him or her astray. It is therefore to be understood that within the first four years of his sadhana, the Master's ever-pure mind acted as his guru to guide him and help him to realize God. We have heard from the Master that at that time his mind not only taught him what to do and what not to do, but at times it would also manifest itself as a separate person who would emerge from his own body and appear before him. That person would encourage him to practise sadhana and threaten him with punishment if he did not dive deep into meditation. That person would also explain to him why he should practise a particular ritual, and would tell him what the result would be. During meditation he would see a young monk holding a sharp trident emerge from his body and say to him, 'If you do not meditate on your Chosen Deity, shunning other thoughts, I will pierce your chest with this trident!' On another occasion he saw that young monk emerge to kill the pleasure-loving papa-purusha [an evil being] when it emerged from his body (236-7).

17. Sri Ramakrishna's clairvoyant mind • Ordinary yogis develop the occult power of clairvoyance by practising *samyama*, concentration, meditation, and samadhi. However, the Master was an avatar, so all those occult powers were always present in him.

During Durga Puja in 1885, the Master was staying at Shyampukur for treatment. During the sandhi puja, he went into samadhi for half an hour. Then he said to his disciples: 'A luminous path opened from this place to Surendra's house. I saw the presence of the Divine Mother in the image; She had been evoked by Surendra's devotion. A ray of light beamed forth from Her third eye! Rows of lamps were lit before the goddess in the worship hall. In the courtyard Surendra was crying piteously "Mother, Mother!" All of you, go to his house right now. When he sees you he will regain his peace of mind' (240).

Immediately Swamiji and other devotees went to Surendra's house. They were amazed when Surendra told them that the Master's vision during samadhi was consistent with the actual events.

18. Sri Ramakrishna's one-pointed mind • A candle is made with white paraffin. The manufacturer adds dye to the melted paraffin and makes candles of different colours. Similarly, the Master's mind would take the colour of a particular mood. At that time if anyone would speak on a different topic, he would experience pain. Saradananda wrote:

Whenever a spiritual mood arose in the Master's one-pointed mind, he would become absorbed in it for some time. That mood would fully occupy his mind, eradicating all else and transforming his body into a suitable instrument for its manifestation. We heard that he possessed this nature from childhood; while we visited Dakshineswar regularly we also witnessed this phenomenon. We observed that when his mind was absorbed in a particular mood—which arose from listening to a song or in some other manner—he felt an excruciating pain if someone sang a different song or spoke in a different mood. Evidently he experienced pain because his thought waves were suddenly obstructed from flowing towards that

particular goal. When a current of thought flows forcefully toward a particular object, the great sage Patanjali called that mental state *savikalpa samadhi*; the devotional scriptures describe it as *bhava samadhi*. From childhood, the Master's mind was accustomed to remaining in that type of samadhi (295).

19. Sri Ramakrishna's powerful mind • The Master's mind was so powerful that it would even affect his body. This is an amazing phenomenon. For example, when he was practising *dasya bhava*, the servant attitude towards God, and took upon himself the mood of Hanuman, his tail bone lengthened about an inch. Again,

when he was practising *madhura bhava*, Radha's attitude towards Krishna, the functions of his body changed. Saradananda recorded: 'He was so absorbed in thinking of himself as a woman that he could not think of himself as a man even in dreams. His body and senses functioned naturally like those of a woman. We heard from the Master that during this time, every month drops of blood would ooze from the pores near his *swadhisthana chakra* for three days, like a woman's monthly cycle' (301).

A similar phenomenon occurred in the life of St Francis of Assisi. While meditating on Christ, the stigmata, the wounds from Christ's



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Sri
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crucifixion on his hands, feet, and side, appeared on his body.

20. Sri Ramakrishna's noble mind • The Master's mind was as vast as space and as deep as the ocean. He disliked narrowness and bigotry. Saradananda wrote:

He was not very fond of anyone who was narrow-minded or dull-witted. We all heard him say: 'You should be a devotee of God, but does that mean you should be a fool?' Or 'Don't be bigoted and narrow-minded; that is not the attitude of this place. The attitude of this place is, 'I shall enjoy food prepared in various ways—in a plain soup, a hot dish, or a sour dish'. He considered a bigoted intellect to be monotonous and hackneyed. If a disciple could not enjoy a particular attitude of God, he scolded him or her, saying, 'You are too narrow-minded'. Undoubtedly motivated by this liberal and universal attitude, Sri Ramakrishna practised the modes of sadhana in all faiths and discovered this great truth: 'As many faiths, so many paths' (712).

Once Girish Chandra Ghosh expressed a wish to write a drama that denounced the Kartabhaja sect of the Vaishnava tradition. But the Master forbade him saying that it is also a path.

21. Sri Ramakrishna's omniscient mind • According to Vedanta, if one knows Brahman, that person knows everything, just as, if one knows gold, one knows all modifications of gold—rings, necklaces, bracelets, and so on. The cosmic mind of the Master travelled in the realm of ideas. He was all-knowing and aware of what others were thinking. Saradananda wrote:

The most amazing thing we observed in the Master was his ability to travel freely in the realm of ideas. He could understand all ideas, great or small. He knew what was in the mind of a child, a youth, or an elderly person. He could grasp the thoughts of the worldly and the holy, of the followers of knowledge and of

devotion, of men and women. He could see how far they had advanced in spiritual life and what methods they had used to do so, as well as the kind of spiritual disciplines they needed at present to make further progress along the path they had adopted. He guided each person in a way that was appropriate for his or her condition. It seemed to us that the Master had experienced in his life the entire range of mental states of the past, present, and future; and he remembered precisely what happened when each one of those states appeared and disappeared in his mind. So when a person described his thoughts to the Master, he could understand them by comparing with his own experiences; and he then instructed that person accordingly (398).

22. Sri Ramakrishna's all-renouncing mind •

We would have to cover our faces in shame if we tried to compare our deceitful minds with the Master's pure mind. Our minds are crooked and two-faced, and we have not learned to free ourselves from worldly desires. Regarding the Master's all-renouncing mind, Saradananda wrote:

The Master said that no worldly object or relationship obstructed his journey to the experience of nirvikalpa samadhi according to Vedanta. At the outset of his spiritual quest he had renounced all desire for enjoyment in exchange for the vision of the Divine Mother. He prayed: 'Mother, here is Thy knowledge and here is Thy ignorance; here is Thy righteousness and here is Thy unrighteousness; here is Thy good and here is Thy evil; here is Thy virtue and here is Thy vice; here is Thy fame and here is Thy infamy. Grant me only pure love for Thee. Do Thou reveal Thyself to me.' With this, he sincerely renounced all desires within his mind because of his pure love for the Mother. Ah, can we experience—or even imagine—that kind of one-pointed love? Sometimes we say to God, 'Lord, I offer everything to You'; in the next moment in everyday life we take possession of everything and reject God, and calculate

our own profit and loss. We consider public opinion before we perform any action. We run around restlessly. As we dream about the future we sometimes sink in boundless misery and the next moment float in excitement. And we are convinced that although we may not be able to overturn the whole world ourselves, at least we can have some effect on it. However, the Master's mind was not deceptive, as is ours. When he said, 'Mother, please take back the things You gave me,' his mind immediately stopped casting covetous looks at them (415).

23. Sri Ramakrishna's truthful mind • We recite the peace mantra of the Rig Veda, 'May my mind be one with my speech and may my speech be one with my mind,'¹⁰ but our honest hearts tell us that prayer is merely on our lips. The Master's life was established in truth and his mind and speech were united. He used to say that religion is to unite the mind and speech. Saradananda described Sri Ramakrishna's steadfast devotion to truth:

Even though the Master offered the Divine Mother righteousness-unrighteousness, virtue-vice, good-evil, fame-infamy, and everything else pertaining to the body and mind, he could not say, 'Mother, take Your truth and take Your untruth.' The Master himself once told us the reason for this. He said that if he renounced truthfulness in that way, how could he hold onto the truth that he had offered everything to the Divine Mother? What steadfast love for truth did we witness in the Master, even though he had offered everything to the Mother! When he said that he would go to a place on a particular day, invariably he went there at the proper time. If he said that he would accept something from a certain person, he could not take that thing from anyone else. When he said that he would not eat a particular thing or do a certain action anymore, he could not eat that food or do that thing from that day on. The Master used to say: 'One who has steadfast love for truth attains the God of truth. The Divine

Mother never allows the words of one who adheres to truth to become untrue.'¹¹

24. Sri Ramakrishna's vivacious mind • The mind of an ordinary person is dull, listless, and unexcitable. But the Master's mind was always full of enthusiasm. It was like a dry match that catches fire instantly. He would experience spiritual awakening even from a trivial conversation



or song. Our minds break down even over petty matters; we become nonplussed and see no way out. The Master loved the robber's brave attitude; he did not care for faintheartedness. To make their minds forceful and resolute, the Master said to his disciples:

Why do you say, 'I shall realize God in the next life, if not in this?' You should not have that kind of lukewarm devotion. 'By His grace I will realize Him in this life and right now'—one should maintain such determination and faith. How can it be possible otherwise? In Kamarpukur when the peasants go to market to buy bullocks for their ploughs they first grab the animals' tails. Some bullocks do not react and meekly lie down on the ground. The peasants recognize that these are without mettle and no good. They select only those bullocks that show spirit and frisk about when their tails are grabbed. Lukewarm devotion is no good. Strengthen your determination and say with conviction, 'I must realize God right now.' Only then will you succeed (438).

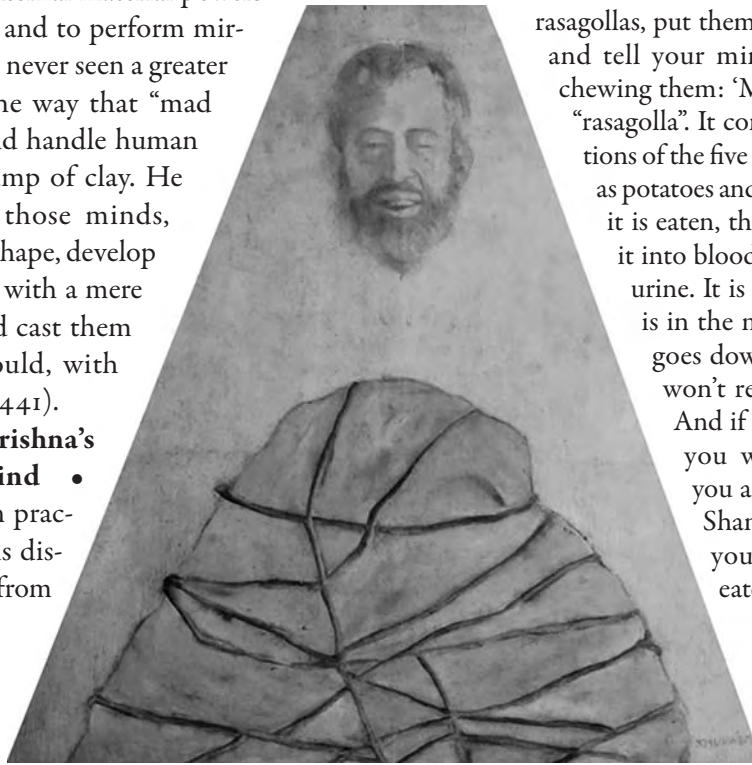
Swamiji described Sri Ramakrishna's mastery over the mind: 'It is no great matter to control external material powers by some means and to perform miracles. But I have never seen a greater miracle than the way that "mad brahman" would handle human minds like a lump of clay. He would pound those minds, beat them into shape, develop them, and then with a mere touch he would cast them into a new mould, with new thoughts' (441).

25. Sri Ramakrishna's discerning mind •

The first step in practicing Vedanta is discerning the real from

the unreal. This is possible only if a person has a sharp intellect and a pure mind. The Master used everyday examples to describe his unusual method of discernment, which left an indelible mark on his disciples' minds:

Listen, one should discriminate between the real and the unreal. Always endowed with discrimination, one should talk to one's mind in this manner: 'You, mind, are eager to enjoy various objects—to eat this thing, to put on that thing, and so on. You see, potatoes, vegetables, rice, lentils, and so on are produced from five elements [Ether, air, fire, water, and earth], and again sandesh, rasagolla, and other delicious sweets are made from the same. The same five elements that made a beautiful female body, consisting of bones, flesh, blood, and marrow, made your body as well—and also all bodies of men, cows, goats, sheep, and so on. Why do you crave such things and even die for them? They cannot help you to attain God.' If the mind is still not convinced, enjoy something a couple of times with discrimination, and then renounce it. For example, your mind is inordinately desirous of eating rasagolla, and you are helpless to bring it under control. All your powers of discrimination are ineffective. So buy some rasagollas, put them into your mouth, and tell your mind while you are chewing them: 'Mind, this is called "rasagolla". It consists of modifications of the five elements, the same as potatoes and vegetables. When it is eaten, the body transforms it into blood, flesh, faeces, and urine. It is sweet as long as it is in the mouth, but after it goes down the throat, you won't remember its taste. And if you eat too much, you will be sick. Still you are so greedy for it! Shame on you! Fie on you! Now you have eaten rasagolla; don't



hanker after it anymore.' (*Pointing to the would-be monastics*): One should use this process of discrimination when enjoying ordinary things, and then renounce them. But this method does not apply to serious things; one becomes entangled as soon as one indulges in them. That is why one should drive serious worldly desires away from the mind by using discrimination and seeing the fault in them' (466-7).

26. Sri Ramakrishna's detached mind • The scriptures say that the mind of a knower of Brahman is not affected by pleasant and unpleasant, good and evil, happiness and misery, praise and blame. Such a person's mind is saturated with the Atman, so there is no feeling of happiness and misery. The Master said that two persons live inside me—a devotee and the Mother. He said that the devotee had cancer in the throat, but the Mother is free from it. The Master would experience pain when his mind came down to the physical plane. He lived in a body, but in reality, he was beyond the body.

Once when he was in bhava samadhi, a chunk of live charcoal fell on his body and he did not feel it. At Janbazar in Calcutta, Mathur's priest Chandra Halder once kicked him, but he did not feel any humiliation or pain. There are many such examples in his life. Sri Ramakrishna's advice was that pain and misery should know each other and the mind should dwell in bliss.

When an avatar incarnates in this world, she or he behaves like a human being. The mind of an avatar has feelings; the avatar is not like a piece of wood or stone. The Master cried when loved ones died, including his nephew Akshay, his mother, and his devotee Adhar. But that temporary grief did not overwhelm him. In addition, shame, hatred, and fear could never arise in the Master's mind, as it was always filled with love, compassion, and forgiveness. This is a characteristic of the mind of an avatar.

27. Sri Ramakrishna's simple mind • Regarding the simplicity of the Master's mind, M., gave this example:

Once the Master ate at Keshab Sen's house, though Keshab was not a brahmin. He forbade us to tell anyone about it, lest the temple officials refuse to let him enter the Kali temple. The next day, however, when the temple manager was passing by, the Master told him: 'Yesterday I went to Keshab's house and he gave me a sumptuous feast. I don't know whether the food was served by a washerman or a barber. Will it harm me?' Smiling, the manager replied: 'No, sir, it is all right. Nothing can pollute you.' The Master was simple like a child.¹²

Saradananda wrote:

The Master told us many times that he visited each holy place with a specific spiritual mood in mind. He said: 'I expected to find everyone in Varanasi absorbed in samadhi, meditating on Shiva twenty-four hours a day, and everyone in Vrindaban wild with ecstatic joy in the company of Krishna. But when I went to those places, I found them to be different.' The Master's extraordinary and simple mind accepted and believed everything like a five-year-old boy. Since childhood, we have learned to look upon people and things with critical eyes. How can our crooked minds have that kind of faith? When we find people who believe anything without question, we consider them foolish and dull-witted. We heard from the Master for the first time: 'Look, people become guileless and open-minded as a result of many austerities and various sadhanas. One cannot attain God without simplicity. He reveals His true nature to a person who is simple and believing.' Again, lest one think that one must be stupid in order to become honest and believing, the Master said: 'Be a devotee. But does that mean you should be a fool?'¹³

28. Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful mind: According to the scriptures, all the desires of a knower of Brahman are fulfilled. Saradananda wrote:

At this time in Cossipore the Master was suffering terribly from cancer. Swami Vivekananda and some of us tearfully implored the Master to apply his mental powers to freeing himself from disease for our sakes, but he could not make such an effort. He said that although he tried to do this, he could not create a strong resolve in his mind at all. He told us: 'I could by no means bring this mind back from Satchidananda and put it in this cage of flesh and bone. I've always considered this body to be trifling and contemptible, and have offered my mind to

the Divine Mother forever. Now, my children, how can I bring it back from Her and put it on the body?' (630).

The disciples could not fathom how the Master's wondrous mind would roam in higher realms. Once the Master expressed a boyish eagerness to see a couple of things through a microscope, so the devotees decided that they would borrow one and show it to the Master that afternoon. Dr Bipin Bihari Ghosh brought a microscope to Balaram's house to show the Master. Saradananda wrote:

The Master got up and went to the microscope but returned without looking through it. When he was asked why, he said, 'The mind is now in such a high plane that I can by no means bring it down to a lower plane to see things.' We waited quite a while to see if the Master's mind would come down. But that day the Master's mind did not return from that exalted spiritual plane, so he could not see anything through the microscope. Bipin showed it to some of us and finally left with the instrument (630).

M., recorded how the Master's mind would travel in the infinite Brahman and the finite world simultaneously:

When the Master was going to Vidyasagar's house he asked me: 'My shirt is unbuttoned. Will that offend Vidyasagar?' I assured him: 'Oh, no! Don't be anxious about it. Nothing about you will be offensive.'

What a wonderful person the Master was! A few minutes earlier in the carriage he had been in samadhi, and when he alighted he was still absorbed in that mood, so his steps were faltering. But still he was quite aware of social formalities, such as the condition of his clothes. What a fantastic mind he had! At that time two opposite ideas were harmonized in his behaviour. On the one hand his mind had transcended the world and was merged in God, and on the other he was inquiring about human



affairs. This should be the ideal: 'True to the kindred points of heaven and earth.' This we find in the lives of the avatars [incarnations]. The avatar brings the message of the Infinite to the finite world.¹⁴

A bright, transparent crystal has no colour. However, when one puts a red, blue, or yellow flower near it, one sees that particular colour in that crystal. There is no colour in Brahman or the Atman. All colours are in the realm of prakriti or maya, which has three gunas, qualities. One becomes many when the colours of the three gunas are superimposed on the Atman. Prakriti has adorned herself with many colours and thus enchant human beings. God plays with the power of maya, creating multiple colours and enacting the Doljatra or Holi, the festival of colours.

The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says: 'He, the one and undifferentiated, who by the manifold application of his powers produces, in the beginning, different objects for a hidden purpose, and in the end withdraws the universe into himself, is indeed the self-luminous supreme Self. May he endow us with clear intellect.'¹⁵

What is this power? Why did God create variety and diversity? This is God's power of maya. With this power, God created variety to enjoy His own *lila*, divine play. God remains hidden during creation and preservation, but at the time of dissolution, God absorbs the creation within himself. Again, at the dawn of creation, God begins to create variety as he did in the previous cycle. Human beings pray for a pure intellect to understand this divine mystery.

It is not possible for human beings to measure the mind of Sri Ramakrishna because our minds are impure, finite, and limited, whereas Sri Ramakrishna's mind was pure, infinite, and unlimited. During the waking state, Sri Ramakrishna would be aware of this universe

and the beings within it, but they would dissolve during samadhi. When Sri Ramakrishna touched Swamiji's chest, the world vanished from the latter's mind; when Sri Ramakrishna touched him again, the world returned. What great power the Master had! That is why the Upanishad referred to God as 'the great magician' (3.1).

On 19 September 1884, Sri Ramakrishna said to Radhika Goswami: 'A man had a tub of dye. Such was its wonderful property that people could dye their clothes any colour they wanted by merely dipping them in it. A clever man said to the owner of the tub, "Dye my cloth the colour of your dye-stuff".'¹⁶

Now we will have to be a little clever and pray to him: 'Master, please dye our minds the way you have dyed yours.'

This is the meditation on Sri Ramakrishna's mind.



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The Four Yogas in Swami Vivekananda's Comprehensive Vision

Swami Atmarupananda

Yoga Prior to Swami Vivekananda

SANSKRIT HAS a historical evolution that can be traced from early Vedic times to the present. Words came into popular use, and went out of use. Within that history, the Sanskrit word 'yoga' has an ancient place: its root *yuj*— 'to join', 'to connect', or 'to unite'—is part of

Sanskrit's most ancient heritage. Not only is *yuj* found, together with its derivative forms, in the early Vedic texts, but it belongs to a period before the splitting of the branches of the Indo-European family of languages: it is found, as most readers will know, in the English word 'yoke'.

If modern ideas of the evolution of thought and language are correct, then abstract terms come from extending the meaning of more tangible, physical terms. And so perhaps the earliest

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meaning of *yuj* is 'to join things'; and of 'yoga,' 'a connection' or 'a joining' of two or more 'things,' as in the English 'yoke'.

However that may be, the word 'yoga' came to mean 'a joining,' not just of physical things but of more abstract realities. In the Vedas the word comes to indicate the union of the individual consciousness with reality itself: the mind with Brahman through concentration or the consciousness itself through identity with the infinite Consciousness.

Subsequently, came the word to indicate the path to such union. And it is in that sense that it is most commonly used now.

The word 'yoga' in these two spiritual meanings—joining of the individual with the cosmic reality and the path leading to such union—has been common in India from at least the late Vedic Age to the present.¹ In time, there came to be different yogas or paths. Each of the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavadgita is a yoga, including the first chapter, 'Yoga of the Dejection of Arjuna.' The tantric movement brought many new yogas, or at least it made known many yogas: mantra yoga, *laya* yoga, kundalini yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, and so on. As a path, each had its own distinctive description and stages of progress, and even as a goal, the differences became defined; so much so that Bhoja, the commentator on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, says that 'yoga means *viyoga*' or 'yoga means separation' and not union, as the goal of Patanjali's yoga is *kaivalya*, the separation of the individual purusha, soul, from prakriti, 'nature' in the most comprehensive sense, as everything that is experienced as object by consciousness.²

Though in the Hindu tradition there were no firewalls separating traditions—they existed in communication with each other, mutually influencing each other—the great acharyas of Vedanta didn't generally speak of Patanjali's Yoga or

the tantric yogas; rather they all recognised three yogas: karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga.³

This was the general background, in brief, against which Swami Vivekananda stood when he went to the West to teach Vedanta. When he arrived in the US, some educated people had heard of yoga, and some like the theosophists had become familiar with the term. In England it was more widely known. But there were many misconceptions in the popular mind: those with esoteric interests, like the theosophists, had joined yoga to the idea of the mysterious and secret and occult; and the popular mind had identified it with fortune telling, snake-charming, and magic tricks.

Yoga in Today's World

Skipping forward to the modern world, the word 'yoga' is today well known in most countries. It has for long had an entry in British and American English dictionaries. From North America to Iran, from Europe to Japan, from Australia to South America, the word 'yoga' is known, although the form of yoga known popularly is hatha yoga, with its asanas and pranayama. Even so, many people come for a calming and centring form of exercise with recognised therapeutic benefits, but then become interested in meditation as well. In the US, even small villages will have at least one yoga teacher. In some states it is found in public schools; it is often found in retirement communities for the elderly, at the YMCA, in churches, and in countless studios. In Iran there are over two hundred yoga studios.

Going beyond the popular understanding of yoga, one finds the word used in a deeper sense, at least in the US, by those representatives of different religions who are more spiritually inclined: a Jewish rabbi might speak of karma yoga in his tradition, a Christian minister might speak of raja yoga practices in her tradition, a

Sufi Muslim might speak of jnana yoga in his tradition. At least that has been the direct experience of the present author on several occasions.

How did we get here from the ignorance of the late nineteenth century?

There have been many Hindu teachers of various traditions to come to the West over the last century. And all of them have served to popularise the term. But first among them was Swamiji and it is his basic conception of the yogas that has remained dominant.

So what was his conception?

Swami Vivekananda and the Four Yogas

As mentioned earlier, the various Vedanta acharyas—founders or systematisers of the various schools of Vedanta—generally accepted three yogas: karma, bhakti, and jnana. Some gave prominence to one, others to another. All taught them as forming successive stages along the path: the advaitins put karma yoga first, optionally followed by bhakti, and transcended by jnana, the only liberating yoga; others like Ramanujacharya said that, yes, karma should be first, but it should be followed by jnana, and finally bhakti follows as the culmination, the sole source of liberation. Some, like Madhvacharya, held that karma yoga should be followed throughout one's life, even though it can't grant liberation; and others, like Acharya Shankara, held that karma and jnana could not be reconciled, and therefore karma had to be renounced in order to practise jnana yoga. All of them taught that karma yoga was only for the purification of mind: it could not lead directly to liberation. And all of them thought of karma yoga as the non-attached performance of caste duty and Vedic injunctions, without desire for their fruits in this life or the afterlife; that is, one performed them simply because they were to be done, not for their earthly or heavenly benefits.

Then came Swamiji, who broke down narrow conceptions which had kept the yogas static and restricted to orthodox Hindu observance. He expanded conceptions, gave new life to ancient ideas, and made them relevant to the modern world, within India and also beyond.

How did he accomplish this?

First of all, he systematised the yogas in a new, modern way.

He made karma yoga once again a full yoga, as it is in the teachings not only of the Gita, but the whole of the Mahabharata. No longer is it just a preliminary practice to bring basic purity of mind. It is a means to liberation. He defines work thus: 'Every mental and physical blow that is given to the soul, by which, as it were, fire is struck from it, and by which its own power and knowledge are discovered, is Karma, this word being used in its widest sense.'⁴ In this definition he shows the spiritual potency of work and he also universalises it: that is, he doesn't define action in terms of caste duty but in terms of action itself, applying it to all intentional action in all situations.

He also took two traditions—the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali and raja yoga of the tantras, including its dynamic system of kundalini—and joined them into one. Further, he harmonised this combination of Patanjali's yoga, with its foundation in Sankhya philosophy, and raja yoga, with its tantric foundation, with Advaita Vedanta.

And in tune with the realisations of Sri Ramakrishna, he put jnana yoga and bhakti yoga on equal footing, and showed the ultimate harmony of the two. Thus he took the three classical yogas of the various schools of Vedanta, and added a fourth, which he called raja yoga; but he removed the hierarchy that had been established by the acharyas, and made each of them an integral path in itself, independently capable of leading one to liberation.⁵

Universalising the Yogas

Second, he universalised the concept of yoga. Yoga, according to Swamiji, is spiritual realisation, and secondarily the path to such realisation, *any* path to such realisation. Spiritual life *is* yoga, and it is the heart and oft-hidden purpose of religion itself, of *all* religions. The Christian praying is practising yoga, the Sufi in dhikr is practising yoga, the Jew 'wrestling with God' is practising yoga, just as the Hindu and Buddhist and Jain and Sikh are practising yoga in their various ways. Christian yoga, Islamic yoga, Jewish yoga, if one will, but yoga nonetheless, because yoga has come to mean spiritual practice, plain and simple, through the influence of Swamiji.

In this, Swamiji was going back to the Vedic idea of religion, where Religion is one, but ways of practising it are many. As Swamiji said, the idea that there are different religions came into India when the Buddhists defined themselves as opposed to the Vedic tradition. There was nothing in Buddhism that could not have been accommodated within the Vedic tradition, because the Vedic tradition saw truth as ultimately beyond speech and mind: such disparate traditions as Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, and Mimamsa were included. Therefore definitions were tools and thus flexible; but the Buddhists took, and still take, definitions extremely seriously: for them, definitions are made of steel, not of rubber; and they decided that the Vedic tradition would not fit their strict categories.⁶

In Sri Ramakrishna's realisations and in the teachings of

Swamiji, this Vedic insight, this truth that religion is one, has been revitalised and made capable in time of bringing religions of the world together in harmony. And one way Swamiji made that possible conceptually was through his universalising of the concept of yoga.

That, however, is not all that he did.

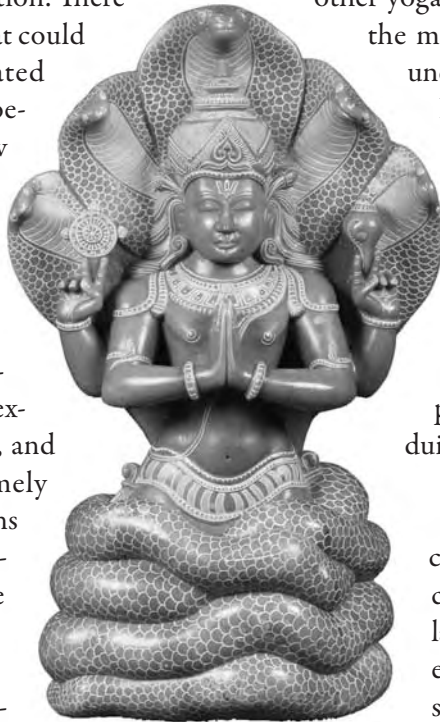
The Four Yogas Are Comprehensive

As we've already mentioned, apart from Patanjali's yoga, there were many yogas recognised in the Hindu tradition: the classical three—karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga—and many others mentioned in the sutra literature, the puranas, the *itihisas*, and the tantras. And we've seen how Swamiji divided the whole field of yoga or spiritual striving into four types: karma yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga, or the paths of action, psychic control, devotion, and knowledge. Did he do this by 'lopping off' the other yogas? No. Rather he saw that all the many yogas could be classified under these four main headings.

Not just the many yogas mentioned in the Hindu tradition, but all spiritual striving in all religions could be classified under these four headings. Each of Swamiji's four yogas, then, is a vast field, not a narrowly defined path limited to orthodox Hinduism, as we'll see further along.

Why four?

Because together they are comprehensive, and they are comprehensive because they relate to the four fields of human experience. Every comprehensive philosophy or system of thought must explain these four



Maharishi Patanjali

fields: the experience of self; the experience of the world; the experience of reality, which is also the experience of value; and the mind, which is the instrument of experience itself. There is nothing outside these four comprehensive fields of experience.

Jnana yoga deals with the experience of self. Karma yoga deals with the experience of the world. Bhakti yoga deals with the experience of ultimate reality or ultimate value. And raja yoga deals with the mind itself, the instrument of all experience. The jnani seeks to know 'Who am I?' The karma yogi seeks to find freedom in the midst of action in the world.⁷ The bhakta seeks God as the highest value and ultimate reality. The raja yogi seeks to perfect the mind till the mind is capable of reflecting the truth, of perceiving the truth directly.

The statement that bhakti yoga deals with ultimate reality and ultimate value needs, perhaps, a word of explanation. Whatever we take as real, assumes value for us, and what we value takes on reality for us. A miser's god is money; the god of many young people is a member of the opposite sex; the god of a glutton is food: these are the objects of highest value and therefore assume the highest reality to their respective 'worshippers'. But the bhakta or follower of bhakti yoga prays with Prahlada of puranic fame: 'That intense love which the ignorant bear towards the objects of this world: may I have that same intensity of love for Thee!'⁸ Why? Because the bhakta realises—at first mentally and finally with the whole soul—that God is the ultimate reality and the only value. As Sri Ramakrishna said, you can have a long string of zeros, and the value is still zero. But put a one in front, and the zeros take on value, *because of* the one. God is the one, and all else the zeros.⁹

There are other ways also to see the comprehensive nature of Swamiji's analysis. For instance,

the ancient Greeks said that the highest human values are truth, goodness, and beauty. And interestingly the Hindus sometimes defined God as *satyam*, *shivam*, *sundaram*, meaning truth, goodness, and beauty, in the same order, even, as listed by the Greeks. Jnana yoga is primarily interested in truth. Karma yoga in goodness. Bhakti yoga in beauty. And raja yoga again deals with the perfection of mind, which is the instrument through which all three values are sought, and that's why in Swamiji's symbol for the Ramakrishna Order, the serpent, the power awakened through raja yoga, encircles the others.

The Expansion of the Yogas

There is another way that Swamiji universalised the four yogas.

He saw each yoga as connected not just to the conscious spiritual strivings of humanity, but as connected to the higher pursuits of human society in general. He thus expanded the yogas beyond the sphere of explicit religion, though in his thought *all* human endeavour is spiritual. He described jnana yoga as the path of philosophy and saw it connected to the philosophical urge within humanity, but defined it broadly to include the scientific urge for truth as well. He saw bhakti yoga as founded in the human pursuit of love and value and aesthetics. He saw karma yoga as joined to the pursuit of service and self-sacrifice and all efforts towards human unity.¹⁰ And he saw raja yoga as the field of psychology and as the science explaining the driving force behind human evolution.

It is this expansion of the yogas to include life itself that allowed him to say: 'In our country we go down on our knees before the man who reads the Vedas, and we do not care for the man who is studying physics. That is superstition; it is not Vedanta at all. It is utter materialism. With God every knowledge is sacred. Knowledge is God.'¹¹

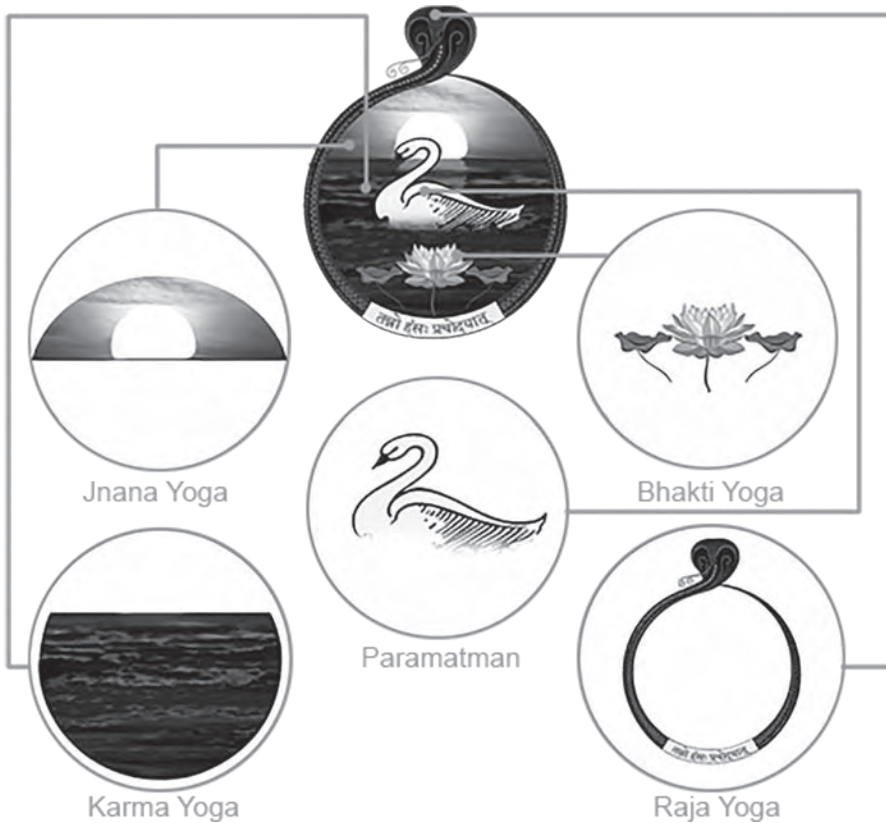
The Relationship of the Four Yogas

It is important also to understand the inner dynamics among the yogas. Though this wasn't specifically taught by Swamiji, it is inherent in the classification. There are two pairs of yogas: jnana and bhakti yogas, and karma and raja yogas. The first pair has to do with our orientation towards reality, and the second pair is concerned primarily with the field of our practice.

The jnana yogi seeks to 'know' through direct, unmediated experience, the impersonal reality. Direct and unmediated, because one seeks to know reality without the mediation of the senses or even the mind: one seeks to 'know' reality, not as an object of knowledge, but through identity, in and as pure nondual consciousness itself. And the reality one seeks is impersonal or beyond all ideas of personality; that is, one doesn't

seek either person or story, not even the supreme Person, God, not even the story of creation. The jnani doesn't ask questions like who has made this universe? or who is the Lord of my life and what is my relationship to her or him? Rather the jnani asks, What is consciousness? What is Truth? What is Being itself? Who am I in the depths of my being, beyond personality? Therefore, it is said that the orientation of the jnana yogi is towards the impersonal reality.

The bhakti yogi, however, seeks the supreme Person, God. For the bhakta, reality is a Person. What does 'person' mean here? Not a limited person like the people around us, not necessarily even a person with a form, though most often God reveals herself or himself through a spiritual form. 'Person' here means 'responsive awareness'. That is, the essence of personhood



is responsive awareness: a self-aware presence to whom we can pray, because she or he hears our prayers; whom we can worship because she or he graciously receives our loving worship; who can lift us out of bondage and grant us liberation because she or he is infinitely free, infinitely powerful, infinitely beneficent.

Therefore, one chooses jnana yoga if one finds it easier to think in terms of impersonal Reality, Truth, Existence, Consciousness; and one chooses bhakti yoga if one seeks God, the supreme Person who is all love, who is responsive and gracious, and yet who is also the infinite Being at the heart of the universe and in the hearts of all beings. Thus jnana and bhakti yogas are primarily oriented towards one or other aspect of reality: impersonal or personal.

But karma and raja yogas are not primarily concerned with the nature of reality: one can seek impersonal reality or the personal God through either yoga, because they are both technique oriented: they are concerned with the field of practice, not the nature of the ultimate reality.

It is obvious that karma yoga can be followed by either a devotional attitude, surrendering the fruits of action to God, or by an impersonal attitude, emphasising non-attachment from the sense of doership. With raja yoga some may object that Patanjali's yoga conceives of reality as the impersonal Purusha, and therefore it is an impersonal path. In answer we can say that Patanjali also gives a

respected place to the path of *ishvara-pranidhana*, surrender to God. Moreover, raja yoga, in the thought of Swamiji, is supported by the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali but not limited to it. Raja yoga is the science of psychology, the science of mind, and its primary concern is the perfection of the mind as an instrument of experience. Direct that mind towards God or direct it towards the impersonal reality; raja yoga doesn't care, as it will lead you to the goal either way.

Harmonising the Yogas in Practice

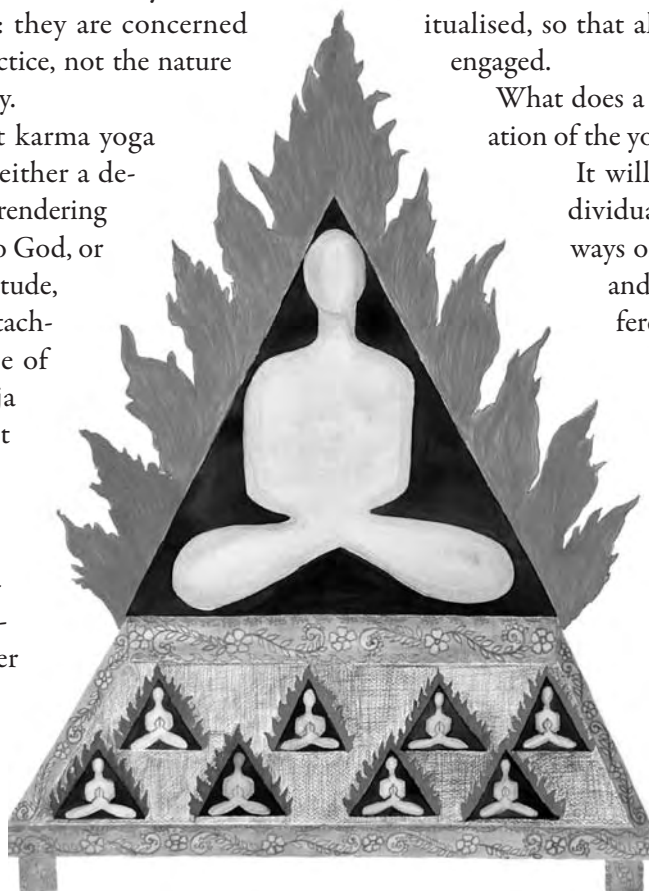
We should touch on one more important aspect of Swamiji's teachings on the four yogas before concluding. Each yoga, according to Swamiji, is independently capable of leading us to liberation. And for some people, focus on a single yoga may be enough. But Swamiji recommended a harmonious combination of the yogas.

Why?

So that our whole life and being are spiritualised, so that all of our faculties are engaged.

What does a harmonious combination of the yogas look like?

It will differ with each individual. There are as many ways of practising the yogas and of combining the different yogas as there are people. 'Harmony' and 'combination' don't mean one fixed thing. It is infinitely varied, because, as Swamiji taught, a particular person's spiritual path is a function of one's individuality.




To understand the idea, look at Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swamiji and his brother disciples: each exemplified a unique harmony of the four yogas. Each was different, each was unique, and yet each had harmonious development. Look also at Acharya Shankara, the great advaitin. Yes, he was a jnani, no doubt, but he wrote hymns full of devotion to the deities; and who was more active, who had greater control of the mind, than he? He manifested a beautiful and unique harmony of all four yogas.

Finding Our Way among the Yogas

How do we find our own way?

That is a larger subject than cannot be handled here. But the basic idea is this: find your own ideal and then see how the different yogas relate to it. Harmony doesn't exist in the abstract: it is what results when a spiritual ideal is pursued through the four yogas. If my main path is jnana yoga, then as I begin to practise it, I find ways of practising it in the midst of action; I find ways of focusing and developing the mind in terms of it; and I find my impersonal ideal manifested in the divine Person, God, whom I can then worship from the standpoint of my ideal. And the same can be done whatever my central ideal might be. As indicated before, each yoga is not a narrow footpath, but a vast superhighway with an infinite number of lanes, as many lanes as there are individuals.

And thus we find our way towards Swamiji's ideal, where life itself becomes yoga. 

Notes and References

1. This is a deliberately conservative statement; it may go back much earlier in this advanced, spiritual sense.

2. See Bhojadeva, *Bhojavritti* or *Rajamartand-abhidhavritti*, Introductory verses, 3.
3. There are various notable exceptions; for instance, the Vedantic text *Aparokshanubhuti* of Acharya Shankara gives a Vedantic interpretation of the eight limbs of yoga. And though its authenticity is not beyond doubt, there is a commentary on the *Yoga Sutra* attributed to the great Acharya Shankara. *Saundarya-lahari*, a tantric text, is attributed to Acharya Shankara. And Gaudapada speaks of *asparsha*-yoga, the yoga of the untouched or the utterly non-attached. Still, the point holds.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.29.
5. Swamiji admitted that to attain the highest perfection, knowledge is required, the immediate, experiential knowledge that *aham brahmasmi*, 'I am Brahman'. That is, purity of mind by itself or concentration of mind by itself, is not what liberates, but the direct knowledge of one's identity with Reality. But through karma yoga and raja yoga one can attain to such proximity to perfection that such knowledge is easily attained.
6. The point presented in this paragraph has been greatly simplified, so much so that scholars may reject it. If, however, there were ample space for such tangents, the point could be defended more rigorously.
7. It should be mentioned that even karma yoga is, like all yogas, internal; it, too, is mental. Work isn't what liberates; liberation comes from what one does with one's mind while working. Karma yoga is practised by changing one's ideas, one's attitudes, one's reactions, one's emotions, one's instincts and drives in the midst of action, till one's very perception of world and self and reality changes.
8. *Vishnu Purana*, 1.20.19: 'Ya priti-avivekanam vishayeshv-anapayini, tvam-anusmaratah sa me hridaya-ma'pasarpatu.'
9. See M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 178.
10. He saw it working even in the conquering ambition of Genghis Khan and Napoleon. See *Complete Works*, 9.368.
11. *Complete Works*, 8.137.

Yoga and Upanishads

Swami Nityasthananda



VEDANTA AND YOGA can be considered as two central pillars of Hinduism. Vedanta provides the rational and metaphysical background to Hinduism, whereas yoga is concerned with the methods of realising Vedantic truths. A Similar idea is expressed in the *Yoga Vasishtha*: 'Rama, there are two methods for the destruction of the mind, yoga and jnana. Yoga is the stopping of the movements of the mind and jnana is perceiving rightly.'¹ Here jnana is related to the Upanishadic inquiry into the ultimate Reality and yoga is the practical method of realising that Reality. Both are absolutely necessary—one illumines the path and another takes

us along with the path. Jnana without yoga is lame and yoga without jnana is blind.

These days, yoga is becoming very popular all over the world, giving a healing touch to millions of people and introducing Indian ancient wisdom to the whole world. We can identify three aspects of yoga related to three dimensions of human personality: physical, mental, and spiritual. The physical aspect of yoga mainly consists of different kinds of asanas and pranayamas, which are conducive for the physical wellbeing of a human being. Innumerable cases and experiments attest to its credibility as an alternative system of curing. Yoga has also proved to be very effective in overcoming certain mental problems such as depression. But here we are primarily concerned with its spiritual aspects.

IMAGE: GANGES IN VARANASI / LUCÍA PUERTAS, SPAIN / FLICKR

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The term 'yoga' is etymologically derived from two roots: *yuj* and *yujir*. *Yuj* means samadhi, deep concentration, in which the real nature of the individual Self is revealed. *Yujir* means joining together or union. Here it refers to the union of individual Self and the universal Self. The former is the yogic definition and the latter is the Vedantic definition of yoga. We need to consider both these definitions of Yoga—former representing the process of individualisation and the latter representing the process of universalisation. These two processes give a complete picture of a human being's spiritual journey towards ultimate perfection. Let us delve into these processes with reference to yoga and the Upanishads.

The Process of Individualisation

As Swami Vivekananda points out, we are not yet individuals, because of our identification with body, mind, and senses, and so on, which are constantly changing. He says:

Individuality means what cannot be divided. How can you call this individuality? One hour you are thinking one way, and the next hour another way, and two hours after, another way. Individuality is that which changes not—is beyond all things, changeless. It would be tremendously dangerous for this state to remain in eternity, because then the thief would always remain a thief and the blackguard a blackguard. If a baby died, he would have to remain a baby.²

Individuality consists in the recognition of something as 'myself'. I cannot point out to my body as myself for it is constantly in flux, every moment it is changing. I cannot even point out to mind and senses, for they too are incessantly changing. And the ego is so eluding, I cannot find out what it is and where it is. If this is the situation, what constitutes my real individuality? If I can assert that I am the spirit, there lies

my real individuality, for the spirit is the one unchanging element in my personality.

To realise my spiritual nature, I have to separate myself from the products of Prakriti such as intellect, mind, senses, and the body, which are the different segments of my individual personality. All the sufferings that is unavoidable in this embodied state are due to my identification with these products of Prakriti. As Patanjali says: 'The unity of seer and seen is the cause of suffering that is to be avoided.'³

Vyasa quotes a sentence in his commentary on the *Yoga Sutra* that explains the result of this identity: 'The unawakened person regards animate and inanimate objects as part of his own self, and rejoices at their acquisition, considering one is being enriched by them, and bemoans at their loss, considering something of one is lost.'⁴ Commenting on the Bhagavadgita, Madhusudana Sarasvati gives a very illuminating interpretation of the word *sneha*: 'When *sneha* or attachment is there, the loss and gain belonging to other things are attributed to oneself.'⁵

To refrain from this identification and to establish in one's own real self, yoga is to be practised. In the Gita, yoga is defined as *viyoga*, separating oneself from everything other than the self. Patanjali says: 'Yoga is restraining of all thought waves of the mind.'⁶ Swamiji compares the mind to a lake. If the water of the lake is full of waves and the water itself muddy, the bottom of the lake is not visible. However, when the waves are subsided and the water is clean, we can clearly see the bottom of the lake. Similarly, when all thought waves are controlled and the mind becomes pure, free from past impressions, samskaras, then our real spiritual nature is revealed. To control thought waves one has to practise meditation and to purify the mind one must practise detachment. That is why, Patanjali further says: 'The control of the mind is possible

through constant practice of meditation and detachment' (1.12).

The *Yogavasishttha* compares the mind to a tree surrounded by creepers called *vrittis*, thought waves, and this tree has two seeds, one is the vibration of prana and the other is intense thinking: 'The tree that is the mind has two seeds: the movement of breath and subconscious impression. When one of these two is destroyed, both are quickly destroyed.'⁷

Here, vibration of prana is considered as one of the seeds of this mind-tree. The prana must be harmoniously functioning in the system. If it gets concentrated in a particular centre of the system, that particular centre is activated. Because of this pranic function, man is sometimes overpowered by lower impulses, which is again fuelled by intense thinking, *dridha-bhavana*, the other seed of this mind-tree. So these two help each other to make the samskaras firm in the mind. That is why the practice of pranayama is recommended in the yoga system, to control the movement of prana and make it function harmoniously in the system.

The intense thinking of sense objects is ruinous to spiritual life, leading one ultimately, step by step to complete spiritual death. This idea is very forcefully and graphically expressed in the Gita: 'In one who dwells longingly on sense objects, an inclination towards them is generated. This inclination develops into desire, and desire begets anger. Anger generates delusion, and delusion results in loss of memory. Loss of memory brings about the destruction of discerning intelligence and loss of discerning intelligence spells ruin to a person.'⁸

By constantly thinking about some object of the senses, attachment towards that object is developed. The attachment is of two types: one is through love and the other is through hatred. We constantly think about the one whom we hate intensely and we get attached to that

person negatively. This attachment produces a desire to possess or enjoy the desired object or harm the hated object or person. Since all the desires can never be fulfilled, unfulfilled desires bring about frustration which in turn makes the person irritable by nature, because of which one gets irritated even by the slightest disturbances. This leads one to delusion in which one is not aware of what one is doing, one becomes mechanical, impulsive, self-hypnotised, and loses the discerning faculty completely. Without this discerning faculty, a person is no more a human being, but is only an intelligent animal propelled by instinctual drives.

Through the practice of yoga if we are able to extricate ourselves from the products of prakriti and establish ourselves in our own spiritual nature, then only would we be free from all these dehumanising negative emotions, *kleshas*.

The Process of Universalisation

The fundamental idea of the Upanishads is the unity of existence—there is only 'one reality without any second.'⁹ The Upanishads are replete with ideas like, 'All this [phenomenal universe] is indeed Brahman' (3.14.1), 'Here there is no multiplicity',¹⁰ 'All this [universe] is pervaded by the Lord',¹¹ and so on. And also the Upanishads make no distinction between the individual self and the universal Self. The *mahavakyas*, great sentences, like 'I am Brahman'¹² and 'You are That',¹³ speak eloquently about the identity of the individual and the universal Self.

In fact, there is no individuality for us in all the three levels—physical, mental, and spiritual. Swamiji says:

Physically this universe is one: there is no difference between the sun and you. The scientist will tell you it is only a fiction to say the contrary. There is no real difference between the table and me; the table is one point in



the mass of matter, and I another point. Each form represents, as it were, one whirlpool in the infinite ocean of matter, of which not one is constant. ... There is no such thing as my body, or your body, except in words. Of the one huge mass of matter, one point is called a moon, another a sun, another a man, another the earth, another a plant, another a mineral. ... Thus, even in the universe of thought we find unity, at last, when we get to the Self, we know that that Self can only be One.¹⁴

The idea of oneness—identification of object and subject—expressed in the Upanishadic dictum ‘You are That’ is applicable to all the three levels of human personality and must impel us to develop a universal outlook in the present context of globalisation, eschewing all parochial attitudes that impede the progressive march of civilisation.

Swamiji said that religion is an eternal relationship between eternal soul and eternal God. Through the practices of yoga, as our spiritual nature is revealed, great attraction towards God, who is universal, will arise in the mind, because our relationship with God is spiritual, not

physical, and not even mental. Sri Ramakrishna explains this with the help of the example of iron and magnet. When the iron is full of rust, being associated with moisture, a magnet cannot attract it, and when it is free from rust, it is simply pulled towards the magnet. Similarly, as long as the soul is associated with the products of prakriti, it remains away from God, not being attracted by God. However, when the soul is free from this association and its binding fetters, God will simply drag the soul towards God. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says: ‘Then the spiritual aspirant, being free from merit and demerit associated with prakriti attains the highest oneness with God, who is free from all blemishes.’¹⁵

The same Upanishad explains this process of union with the example of two birds sitting on the same tree. It is better to present here Swamiji’s most illuminating description of this example:

Two birds of golden plumage sat on the same tree. The one above, serene, majestic, immersed in his own glory; the one below restless and eating the fruits of the tree, now sweet, now bitter. Once he ate an exceptionally bitter fruit,

then he paused and looked up at the majestic bird above; but soon forgot about the other bird and went on eating the fruits of the tree as before. Again that bird ate a bitter fruit, and this time hopped up a few boughs nearer to the bird at the top. This happened many times until at last the lower bird came to the place of the upper bird and lost itself. It found all at once that there had never been two birds, but that it was all the time that upper bird, serene, majestic, and immersed in one's own glory.¹⁶



The upper bird is God, the Lord of this universe; and the lower bird is the human soul, eating the sweet and bitter fruits of this world. After repeated bitter experiences, the soul turns towards God and slowly moves towards God. When it comes close to God, it finds that it is no other than God.

In the *Katha Upanishad*, we find the ideas of yoga being expressed very clearly: 'The sense-objects are higher than the senses, and the mind is higher than the sense-objects; but the *buddhi*, intellect, is higher than the mind, and the *mahat*, great soul, is higher than the intellect. The unmanifested is higher than *mahat*; the Purusha is higher than the unmanifested. There is nothing higher than the Purusha. The Purusha is the culmination, Purusha is the highest goal.'¹⁷ Here Purusha is identified with the ultimate reality of Vedanta and Purusha associated with *buddhi* is the individual soul or jiva. The ultimate goal of Vedanta is identification of this jiva with Brahman, the universal Reality or God.

One of the methods of doing this is meditating upon the identity of jiva and Brahman, taking *pranava* as the object of meditation: 'Om is the bow; the soul is the arrow; Brahman is called its target. It is to be hit by an unerring man. One should become one with it just like an arrow.'¹⁸

Patanjali also recommends the repetition of Om as the means of knowing one's spiritual nature. He says: 'The symbol of God is *pranava*.'¹⁹ The constant repetition of Om along with the contemplation on God will remove all the obstacles to yoga and reveal the nature of the inner self. According to the *Mundaka Upanishad*, the culmination of this *pranavopasana*, contemplation on Om, is the identity of individual self with the universal Self; 'Brahman is called its target'.

In both, yoga and the Upanishads, meditation is considered an important means of attaining spiritual realisation. Meditation is a special kind of concentration. In ordinary concentration, the mind is focussed on one particular subject and there can be many divergent thoughts related to that particular subject. Here the subject is one, but thoughts are many and dissimilar. For example, if one is reading a book on electricity and if one's mind is concentrated, all the thoughts would centre on electricity alone. There would be different thoughts, but all related to electricity only. But in meditation there should be one subject and one thought related to that. Regarding this special kind of concentration, Swami Yatiswarananda says:

It is important to know the difference between ordinary concentration and meditation. By the word 'meditation' we mean *dhyāna* or contemplation. It is not just ordinary concentration. It is a special type of concentration. In the first place, meditation is a fully conscious process, an exercise of the will. Secondly, meditation means concentration on a spiritual idea which presupposes that the aspirant is capable of rising above worldly ideas. And finally, meditation is done usually at a particular centre of consciousness. It is clear that true meditation is a fairly advanced state, attained after long practice. It is the result of long years of discipline.²⁰

If one is meditating on a particular divine form of Sri Rama at a particular centre of consciousness, say the heart, then there would be a continuous flow of the same thought representing the divine form of Sri Rama, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, even the thoughts related to Sri Rama's qualities or his life. This continuous flow of one same thought is called meditation.

According to Patanjali, 'An unbroken flow of thoughts of that object [of meditation] is called *dhyana*.'²¹ This is similar to the *upasana* spoken of in Vedanta. Acharya Shankara gives a vivid description of *upasana* in his commentary on the Gita: '*Upasana* or meditation means approaching an object of meditation as presented by the scriptures, making it an object of one's own thought, and dwelling on it uninterruptedly for long by continuing the same current of thought with regard to it—like a stream of oil poured from one vessel to another.'²²

The analogy of the stream of oil is very appropriate. When we pour oil from one vessel to another, there will be a constant flow of oil without any sound or splash. But when we pour water in similar fashion there is so much of noise and splash all around. If the current of thought flows towards the object of meditation

in an uninterrupted stream without this kind of restlessness, that state is called meditation.

To identify myself with the universal Self, first I have to find out myself, extricating myself from the products of prakriti, the psycho-physical personality, in which my 'self' is lost. The object of yoga is to separate this individual self from the products of prakriti. Then this individual self is to be identified with the universal Self, and this is the object of Vedanta. It is somewhat like taking out the fish from the saline water of the sea and putting it in the ocean of sweet water. The individual self is to be lifted from the ocean of matter and be identified with the ocean of consciousness. And this is achieved through the graded course of meditation. In this way yoga and Vedanta can be harmonised.



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10. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.4.19.
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19. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2.7.
20. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2011), 324.
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Yoga for the Modern Age

Swami Satyapriyananda



THE WORD 'YOGA' is derived from the Sanskrit word *yuj* that means 'to unite' or 'to bind'. It is a cryptic expression well understood by those who know the language and are familiar with Hindu terminology. As no word in any language can be translated exactly into another language, one—even by translating yoga as 'to unite or bind', leaves much unsaid. And it is here that the devil of distortion and misrepresentation enters and misleads people.

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What Yoga Is Not

In a book fair someone misread the book *Jnana Yoga* as *Janana Yoga*! *Janana* means giving birth. There is certainly yoga or union between the fluids of the male and female of a species. However, that does not come under yoga.

I remember that when I was a college student I would ride a bicycle to go from one building to another because it was a huge Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras campus and buildings were far apart. Sometimes a wayside thorn would puncture the tyre and I would have to drag the cycle along to a repair shop and get it mended. Deftly the person in the shop would pull out the tube, find by dipping in a tub of water, where

the puncture had occurred, remove the thorn, and after scrubbing the surface of the tube with a sand paper, stick a cut piece of leather sheet, also made rough, using Araldite as the adhesive. There also we have a union. But that is not yoga.

Union of minds, of friends in an alumni get together are not yoga. United we stand, divided we fall; that remaining unitedly is also not yoga. United in a bond of matrimony is not yoga. We can go on endlessly to point out that a union of *just* any two things does not qualify for the term 'yoga'.

What Yoga Is

In the Hindu scriptures the term yoga occurs in several places. The Bhagavadgita has eighteen chapters and each is called a yoga. For example, the first chapter is titled the *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*, 'Yoga of Arjuna's Grief'.

The words 'yoga' and its variants, 'yogi', a practitioner of yoga, and *yukta*, united through yoga, as also verb forms of *yuj* appear several hundred times in the Gita—left to the reader as an uplifting experience—making it fit to be called a yoga-shastra, a treatise dealing with yoga. That is the richness in Hindu scriptures. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and the life sketch of his direct disciples and of Holy Mother Sri Sarada, address the topic, 'fixing the mind on God' and its equivalent, 'what is the way?', making these rich in the concept of yoga. In several serial issues of *Prabuddha Bharata* of 1998, I discussed the topic of fixing the mind on God in the light of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

The renunciation of the normal materialistic world view and taking up a divine view by the process of deification, 'covering the world both moving and unmoving, with the face of God', is also yoga as pointed out in *Ishavasya Upanishad*.¹ It is also 'practising the presence of God', as propounded by Brother Lawrence, through

the unceasing remembrance of God. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave the mandate to chant unceasingly the name of God for spiritual enlightenment. Thus, yoga is an internal transformation of one's whole being into the Divine one believes in.

Both Sri Ramakrishna in his *Gospel* and Acharya Shankara in his treatise *Vivekachudamani* refer to the transformation of a worm into a cockroach through a fearful attitude; in the yoga of meditation, however, it is an internal transformation through love into the recognition of the Divine that one really is and not into something else, which is different. This transformation is never achieved by 'religious conversion', and hence Hinduism neither believes in proselytising nor has any sympathy for those who believe in proselytisation or for those who change their religious identity gifted to them by God at the time of their birth.

Proselytisation can be compared to one's changing the name, date of birth, or nationality by giving insertions in two local newspapers and filing a legal affidavit. It does not change the person. As Shakespeare famously said, a rose is a rose by whatever name it is called.² In the language of Sri Ramakrishna, water is water, whether it be called *pani*, aqua, *jal*, or whatever else in another language. A sheep in lion's skin does not become a lion; it remains a sheep. So a shepherd need not trouble or burden oneself by trying to give protection to a 'sheep', by giving it a lion's clothing!

The Four Yogas and Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion

We normally consider yogas to be four in number: jnana yoga, the way of knowledge; bhakti yoga, the way of devotion; karma yoga, the way of action; and raja yoga, the yoga of meditation, the king of yogas. The goal of these yogas was

stated beautifully by Swamiji while discussing the concept of a universal religion:

What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action. ... For religion must be able to show how to realise the philosophy that teaches us that this world is one, that there is but one Existence in the universe. Similarly, if the mystic comes, we must welcome him, be ready to give him the science of mental analysis, and practically demonstrate it before him. And if emotional people come, we must sit, laugh, and weep with them in the name of the Lord; we must 'drink the cup of love and become mad'. If the energetic worker comes, we must work with him, with all the energy that we have. And this combination will be the ideal of the nearest approach to a universal religion. Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. Everyone who has only one or two of these elements of character, I consider 'one-sided'; and this world is almost full of such 'one-sided' men, with knowledge of that one road only in which they move; and anything else is dangerous and horrible to them. To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga—union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher; it is the union of *all* existence. This is what is meant by Yoga. This is a Sanskrit term, and these four divisions of Yoga have in Sanskrit different names. The man who seeks after this kind of union is called a Yogi. The worker is called the Karma-Yogi. He who seeks the union through love is called the Bhakti-Yogi. He who seeks it through mysticism is called the Raja-Yogi. And he who seeks

it through philosophy is called the Jnana-Yogi. So this word Yogi comprises them all.³

Concepts Regarding Yoga

Without taking the textbook approach to the subject of yoga, because there are far too many treatises on the subject of yoga with various levels of intricacies, let us look at some basic concepts regarding yoga and sum it up with a discussion on the yoga for the modern age.

Samatvam yoga uchyate; yoga is equanimity •

The Gita mentions that 'yoga is equanimity'.⁴ Some pairs of opposites are presented to bring out the implication of equanimity. Joy and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat, hot and cold, are the examples placed before an ardent student. Depending on the circumstances we have our preferences, our likes and dislikes. In winter, we like to have a bath in warm water. But not so in summer. In summer, we like to have a cold water bath. We rush to a river or a pond and take a swim. Yes, we like to gain quite often but we do not like to gain in weight. We describe at great length how an advocate argued our case to get a favourable verdict but we become mum if we get an adverse decree. Match fixing involves playing to lose! So, we have the innate tendency to choose between what is favourable and what is not. Frequent looking back to see whether we will get what we want takes away much of our energy and as a result we have very little energy left for action. Thus, equanimity helps us by conserving all our energy for performing action. It requires us to constantly check the tendency of the mind to make choices. All the energy is well utilised and there is no looking at this side or that or backwards. The vision is set on the goal just as horses are provided with blinds so that they do not get frightened by the moving traffic on the two sides.

Yogah karmasu kausalam; yoga is dexterity

in action • This idea of equanimity is also conveyed by saying that yoga is dexterity in work. What is meant by the term 'dexterity'? It is skill in doing work but not the technical skills involved. It is that excellent skill of 'how' to perform work without being caught up by the desire for the fruits of action. Those who are not brought up in the Indian tradition and even modern day Indians will oppose the idea of working without desiring the fruits of action. If we are not to desire the fruits of action, they will seek to know, wherein lies the motivation behind working? We may as well sit idle. No work is done and consequently no fruits thereof! But Sri Krishna of keen intellect anticipates this and points out that we have 'the right to action but not to the fruits thereof', and at the same time he also stresses that 'one should not be a seeker after the fruits of actions nor be inclined to take recourse to inaction' (2.47). Sri Krishna warns that no one can remain for even a moment without work; even the maintenance of the body will be impossible without performing action. This is an excellent analysis of our situation: 1. We have

to maintain our bodies. 2. To that end at least we have to work. 3. Every action brings forth its fruit, desirable or undesirable. 4. Look not to see whether the fruits are accruing to you according to your choice. 5. The reason, you have a right to work but not to the fruits thereof.

This idea may not be acceptable. To appreciate this stand, let us consider the case of a student appearing for an examination or for an interview for appointment. What is within the reach of the student? One can prepare adequately; one can ensure that one's mind is fresh and alert. One can choose the questions, the student would answer and choose the approach to the answer that might be the best. What is not within the student's reach? What would be the student's score in the exam or whether one would be selected for the post. That is not in the hands of the individual. This is because one has the right to perform and another has the right to evaluate. To focus one's energy on the task at hand we have to be equanimous. That gives us maximum efficiency and that also conduces to stress-free state of mind; one does not become



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tired. That is the dexterity needed. Swamiji observed that spiritual work does not tire one.

Yet, what about the fruits of our actions? What happens to them? The actions that precede our getting the fruits of actions are the causes and the fruits of actions are the effects. Cause determines the effect; when the cause is perfect, the effect will be waiting for us on a golden platter. One need not therefore worry on that score unnecessarily.

The secret of work, how it leads to perfection • Sri Krishna says in the Gita that depending on one's theoretical and practical knowledge, and further depending on one's attitude or aptitude, one, though engaged in a variety of activities, still reaches the highest goal of life. How is that possible? That from which all beings proceed, that which permeates all existence, by worshipping, not helping, him one attains the highest goal. This is the real fruit to be obtained, for without achieving that, human birth is not meaningful. Let us never forget this aspect of work.

Upanishads gives this analogy for union • The Upanishad gives us an excellent example for yoga or union. *Pranava*, Om, *Aum*, is the bow; Atman is the arrow; Brahman is the target; without any error one should aim and direct that arrow, Atman, towards the target, and like the arrow, become one with that target, Brahman. Uniting the Atman with Brahman is the essence of the *mahavakyas*, great sentences. *Jnanis* meditate on the *mahavakyas*. The tantra texts will state that it is the union of Shakti in the *muladhara* with Shiva in the *sahasrara*. The devotional scriptures state that it is gaining various levels of proximity with one's chosen deity including unification, which ultimate experience a devotee usually does not want. The devotee wants to taste sugar and not become one with it as Sri Ramakrishna said.

Place of equanimity and dexterity in this union • Says Patanjali: 'Success can definitely

be achieved through sound and continuous practice over an extended period of time, carried out in a serious and thoughtful manner.'⁵

Yoga is not for the fickle-minded, the person without focus, always looking for results, ever trying different methods. Sound, continuous practice over long periods of time with an element of sincerity, faith in oneself, and determined effort is needed. Why is it that so many conditions are laid? Sri Ramakrishna tells the parable of a man digging the earth for a well, who after digging a few feet, shifts to another place. Had he only focussed his efforts at one place, he would have obtained access to the water stream. Again he gives the example of two farmers, one intent on bringing water to the field despite the strain and the heat of the sun's rays, and choosing to eat only after the work is over, and another who at the slightest suggestion leaves the field and goes home for food and rest.

Yoga is subject to growth and decay • *Katha Upanishad* states: 'They consider the keeping of the senses steady as yoga. One becomes vigilant at that time, for yoga is subject to growth and decay.'⁶ Carefulness is emphasised again and again. In the celebrated *Sanatsujata Samvada*, the conversation between Sanatkumara and King Dhritarashtra, there occur the following words: 'I call inadvertence itself as death.'⁷ Therefore, one has to be vigilant always. One has to pay very dearly for any slackness.

The goal of all yogas is the same • While yoga is classified into four kinds as seen earlier, their common aim is at unification. This can also be an enigma to one who is not brought up in this tradition. Yoga being what it is by its definition of binding or uniting, why do we have four types of yoga? When one considers the human makeup we see that there are four faculties: knowing, feeling, working, and thinking. Corresponding to these we have jnana yoga,

knowing faculty; bhakti yoga, faculty of feeling; karma yoga, faculty of action; and raja yoga, faculty of thinking. As pointed out by Swamiji in his introduction to *Raja Yoga*, structured in the scientific language used in practical classes: 1. Title of the experiment, 2. Aim of the experiment, 3. Procedure and result, and 4. Precaution. **Title:** ‘Each soul is potentially divine.’

Aim: ‘The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal.’

Procedure and Result: ‘Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more of all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion.’

Precaution: ‘Doctrines or dogmas, rituals or books, or temples or forms, are but secondary details.’⁸

Controlling internal nature is by the science of internal nature of a human being. Controlling external nature is by the control of physical forces and energy impacts acting on us. The precaution is also quite important in the modern world situation because we get into blows over these aspects. The real need is to shape ourselves as enlightened citizens.

Need for Combining the Four Yogas

Swamiji also pointed out that he is a true follower of Sri Ramakrishna, who combines in himself all the four yogas. What is the need for this combination of the four yogas? Even by the pursuit of one yoga, one can experience the latent divinity within and make it patent. However, dry philosophy can make one heartless to the sufferings of others taking the stand that it is all a delusion created by maya; work can make one a workaholic and run after name and fame and cheap popularity, forgetting to focus on our divine nature; devotion alone can make one merely sentimental and a psychological wreck seeing

visions and being on the tiptoe of expectation for miracles; meditation alone can lead to acquisition of powers and lead one astray by one’s running after destructive powers such as doing harm to others or bringing others under one’s control.

What was Swamiji’s logic behind the combination of yogas? ‘I want to give them [Westerners] dry, hard reason, softened in the sweetest syrup of love and made spicy with intense work, and cooked in the kitchen of Yoga, so that even a baby can easily digest it’ (5.104).

Science of Yoga

Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra* lays down the essence of yoga on a sound systematic traditional platform. It defines: ‘Yoga is restraining the *chitta*, mind-stuff, from taking various forms, *vruttis*.’⁹ The *chitta* is compared to a lake. When a stone is thrown into a lake, there arise ripples radiating outwards. These ripples prevent one from seeing the bottom of the lake. The lake, *chitta*, is ever trying to become calm and free from ripples, but the organs, being oriented to go outwards as it is said in the *Katha Upanishad*, create further disturbances.¹⁰ To restrain the organs, to check this outward tendency, and to start the return journey to the essence of intelligence is the main step in yoga, because only in this way can the *chitta* get into its proper course. That is a Herculean task meant for the daring. As soon as the waves have stopped, and the lake has become quiet, one sees its bottom. So with the mind; when it is calm, we see what our own nature is; we do not mix our subjective selves with the objective world around us but remain our own selves. Thus, yoga is checking the outward journey and taking to an inward journey.

Place of Practice and Non-attachment

Preventing the *chitta* from becoming modified is achieved by practice and non-attachment.

What is that non-attachment which has to be practised? The objective world draws the mind outwards because the mind is attached to the objects through a fond remembrance of the welcome experience of a previous contact. This is called *vasana* or latent impression. Every action leaves its impact on the soul. Thus habits are formed. Repeated habits build the character of a person.

How to develop non-attachment? One answer is, to see the defects in the objects. Just as you will be eager and happy to drink a glass of milk because of your remembrance of an earlier occasion when you enjoyed the drink, but that you will set it aside if you are told that the milk has possibly become contaminated with some poison, so too the natural tendency of the mind to run after objects of temptation will get checked by highlighting the defects. So it is said that one should give up the sense-objects like one rejects poison.

What are these defects? 1. The fleeting nature of objects, 'today is and tomorrow is not'. The joys and miseries resulting from transitory things do not linger forever. 2. The objects destroy the vigour of the senses. It is well known that every healthy functioning system in us decays in their vigour. 3. The lack of a true recognition of the source of joy.

If indeed ice cream or anything else for that matter had joy built into it, more joy can be obtained by consuming more and more of it. But we know from the law of diminishing marginal

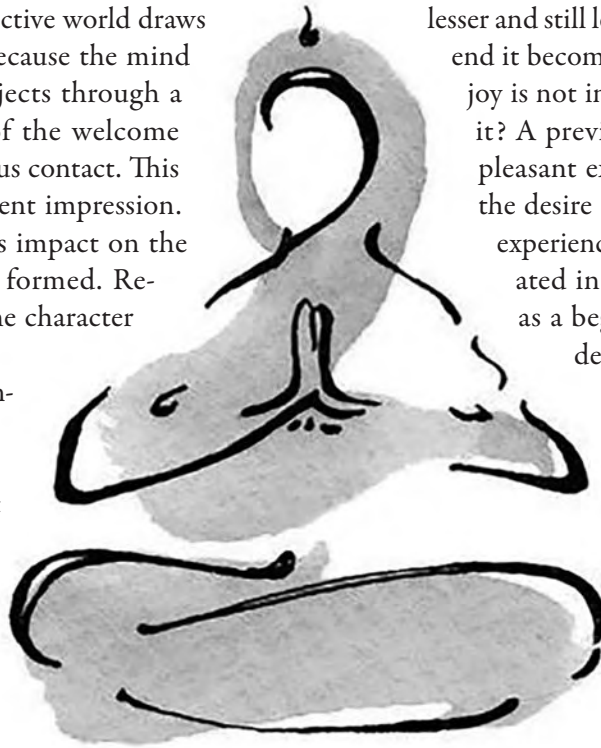
utility, every addition of one unit produces lesser and still lesser satisfaction. At the end it becomes even repulsive. If the joy is not in the ice cream where is it? A previous remembrance of a pleasant experience kindles in us the desire to have a repeat of that experience. The state of want created in us makes us miserable as a beggar. When we get the desired object, for a short while the feeling of want gets removed and the bliss of the Self within shines forth. That is the source of joy. But again we go begging for more from the world around us though with lesser intensity because of partial satisfaction. The desire for

worldly objects gradually turns into disgust as it were and we feel repugnant. However, the desire returns over and again to torment a striving person. Hence along with non-attachment, practice is emphasised to strengthen non-attachment.

The Gita also states: 'The turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person, even while such a person is striving diligently.'¹¹

Viraga and Anuraga

The Indian mind understands that renunciation means *viraga*, dispassion for the world born of sound discernment between the eternal and the ever-changing; and *anuraga*, love for the ultimate Truth by whatever name we call it. Thus renunciation is not a mere negative attitude; it has built into it the positive idea of love for the



ultimate goal of human life. Sri Krishna cautions by saying in the Gita: 'For, the mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, that mind carries away one's wisdom like the wind diverting a boat on the waters' (2.67). Therefore, the wise person ought to control the vagaries of the mind and direct it to God within: 'From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self' (6.26). 'Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of me, the Lord, and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting the war. With your activities dedicated to me and your mind and intelligence fixed on me, you will attain me without doubt' (8.7). 'Fix your mind upon me, the Supreme God, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt' (12.8).

Thus yoga is the sure means to withdraw the vacillating mind from the sense objects and focussing it on the Divine within. God made the senses outgoing and gave us the puzzle to locate the divinity within by turning the mind inward. The *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali says: 'The goal can also be attained by submission to the concept of *ishvara* or an ideal being.'¹² Thus, in yoga, alternative methods are provided for controlling the mind-stuff such as the worship of *ishvara*, repetition of the mystic syllable Om, meditation on the heart of a pure soul, or on any other object of one's choice. Patanjali says further: 'By the repetition of the mantra comes the realisation of the intended deity. By sacrificing all to *ishvara* comes samadhi' (2.44-5).¹³

Pravritti and Nivritti; Tyaga and Seva; Abhyudaya and Nihshreyasa

We started with union as the meaning of yoga and took up the topic of non-attachment to worldly objects. Then we came to the topic of

uniting with our real nature. If the right hand is placed over the left hand, to raise the left hand one needs necessarily to raise the right hand first. Thus getting rid of the attachment to sensual pleasures is a prerequisite to cultivating love for God.

In jnana yoga the term *pravritti*, circling outward, means running after the objects of sense pleasures. After restraining that, we come to the union with our real nature. That is called *nivritti*, circling inwards to our real nature. We are required to shift from *pravritti marga* to *nivritti marga*.

In karma yoga, however, *pravritti* is defined as circling inwards, meaning selfish desire to possess for oneself the objects of sense enjoyment. *Nivritti* is defined as circling *outward*, pouring or emptying oneself in the service of those around oneself, seeing the same Self in all. As Sri Krishna said, God is seated in the hearts of all beings. By this worshipful service to the all-pervading immanent God one attains perfection. Thus a life is well-built on the two wings of *tyaga*, renunciation and *seva*, service. Activity, according to the orthodox tradition, is of two kinds: *pravritti* and *nivritti*. The first kind of activity leads to *abhyudaya*, worldly progress; and the second, to *nihsreyasa*, spiritual perfection.

Steps in Traditional Yoga Practice

Yama, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi* are the eight limbs of yoga. Non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving are called *yamas*. Internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study, and worship of God are the *niyamas*. Posture, *asana*, is that which is firm and pleasant. Until one can get a firm seat one cannot practise breathing and other exercises. Firmness of seat means that one does not feel the body at all. Ordinarily, one will

find that as soon as one sits for a few minutes all sorts of disturbances come into the body; but when one has gone beyond the idea of a concrete body, one will lose all sense of the body. One will feel neither pleasure nor pain. And when one takes one's body up again, it will feel so rested. It is only perfect rest that one can give to the body. When one has succeeded in conquering the body and keeping it firm, one's practice will remain firm, but while one is disturbed by the body, the nerves become disturbed, and one cannot concentrate the mind.

Controlling the motion of the exhalation and the inhalation or pranayama follows after this. Prana is not breath, though it is usually so translated. It is the sum total of the cosmic energy. It is the energy that is in each body and its most apparent manifestation is the motion of the lungs. This motion is caused by prana drawing in the breath, and it is what one seeks to control in pranayama. One begins by controlling the breath, as the easiest way of getting control of the prana. Power resides in the fine nervous system and that is what makes gross muscular motion possible. By controlling the gross breathing process, we get control over the finer forces called prana or vital energy.

The drawing in of the organs, pratyahara, is by their giving up their own objects and taking the form of the mind-stuff, as it were. *Dharana*, concentration, is holding the mind on to some particular object. It is when the mind holds on to some object, either in the body, or outside the body, and keeps itself in that state.

An unbroken flow of knowledge in that object is dhyana. When that, giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning, it is samadhi. That comes when in meditation the form or the external part is given up. Suppose one were meditating on a book and that one has gradually succeeded in concentrating the mind on it, and perceiving

only the internal sensations, the meaning, unexpressed in any form—that state of dhyana is called samadhi. These three when practised in regard to one object is *samyama*.

When a person can direct one's mind to any particular object and fix it there, and then keep it there for a long time, separating the object from the internal part, this is *samyama*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, one following the other, and finally becoming one. The form of the object meditated upon vanishes and only its meaning remains in the mind.

Unity of Goal and Variety in the Practice of Yogas

There is not really so much difference between jnana, knowledge and bhakti, love as people sometimes imagine. In the lower stages, jnana as scriptural studies and bhakti as devotional practices appear to be totally different.

Jnana yoga stipulates stringent requirements for one to be qualified for this path. One has to cultivate discernment between the real and unreal, dispassion for the enjoyments of the fruits of action here on earth and hereafter in the worlds to which we go after death. We must gain the sixfold treasures and have a deep yearning for liberation.

Bhakti yoga does not have any such stipulation. It takes up well known human relationships and directs them to the beloved God. Not even learning is emphasised. Devotion to God is both the means and the goal.

In devotion there are wonderful stages: *ta-diyata*, I am God's, and *madiyata*, God is mine. To belong to God is a great idea; even greater is to feel that God is mine and that none but I can serve God in a proper manner. The devotee becomes greater than God even. Says Sri Ramakrishna: 'In the beginning God becomes the magnet, and the devotee the needle. But in the

end the devotee himself becomes the magnet, and God the needle; that is to say, God becomes small to His devotee.’¹⁴

In the end jnana and bhakti both converge and meet at the same point; higher bhakti and higher jnana are identical. Karma yoga performed as worshipful service to the immanent God also results in the attainment of perfection.

So also is it with raja yoga, which when pursued as a means to attain liberation, and not—as unfortunately it frequently becomes in the hands of charlatans and mystery-mongers—as an instrument to hoodwink the unwary, leads us also to the same goal.

Of course, the several popular yoga institutes or yoga centres and their yoga teachers mushrooming beyond the shores of India are like imitation custards reminding one of the original. Yoga, being India’s contribution to the world, is popular no doubt but it is popularised in the West in a different way for mere physical and mental health. Anything Indian casts its charm, like the dew that falls under and unheard but brings into blossom the fairest of roses. But in the matter of yoga one must perceive the spiritual content.

Repetition of God’s Name: An Internal Powerful Technique for Yoga

In a world of names and forms we repeat the name of our chosen deity and visualise his form. Just as a burning faggot burns the wood in the funeral pyre including the dead body and also burns itself, repetition of the holy mantra leads us to the formless and nameless aspect of the ultimate Truth.

Sri Ramakrishna emphasised singing God’s name with the clapping of hands to overcome sexual craving. Mantra shakti and sadhana shakti have power enough to wean the mind from worldly temptations. Love for God is a far

greater force than the attraction for worldly objects. As a rule, in the age of Kali, repetition of God’s name is extolled.

Swami Adbhutananda, with no recourse to intellectual gymnastics, depended solely on mantra japa, and obtained spiritual realisations through this process and gave great insights into spiritual truths. This constitutes the inner meditative approach to yoga for the modern age.

Service as a Complementary Tool for Yoga

The God of nature becomes the God in nature, which becomes the God, which is nature. By a process of negation, one negates the world; and by a process of affirmation, one accepts that God has become the world. A study of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna reveals innumerable instances of the fascinating power of association. *Shivajnane jivaseva*, serving individual souls knowing them to be Shiva, is one such grand idea presented by Sri Ramakrishna, combining all the yogas to provide a basis for personal freedom and good of the world. One may also map all parts of any action to Brahman, based on the Gita verse that says that everything is Brahman.¹⁵

When one looks in the mirror one sees the reflection in it that is a pointer to one’s face. What happens when the mirror is removed? The reflected image vanishes, or in philosophical language, merges in the face of which it was a reflection. The pointer merges in the pointee, the ultimate Truth. Its name is Silence.

Sri Ramakrishna, citing the example of the sun reflected in a number of pots containing water, asked the question, what remains when the pots are broken one by one. As long as there are some pots and reflections in them, the answer that there is one real sun and a few reflected suns is okay. But when all the pots are broken, there is

no reflected sun and hence, we cannot say that there remains the real sun. He concludes by saying: 'What is remains.'¹⁶

Swamiji bursts forth in the poem, 'To A Friend', revealing his personal experience:

Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee;
I have found in my life this truth supreme—
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,
There's one ferry that takes across the sea
[The sea of samsara].

Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, possession, and the like,
All these are but delusions of the mind—
Love, Love—that's the one thing,
the sole treasure. ...

For, far, however far you may travel,
Mounted on the brilliant mental car,
'Tis the same ocean of the Samsar,
Happiness and misery whirling on. ...

Let go your vain reliance on knowledge,
Let go your prayers, offerings, and strength,
For Love selfless is the only resource;—
Lo, the insects teach, embracing the flame! ...

Ay, born heir to the Infinite thou art,
Within the heart is the ocean of Love,
'Give', 'Give away' — whoever asks return,
His ocean dwindles down to a mere drop.

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.


These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.¹⁷

This maddening divine love provides the unifying power of yoga. Divine love is like a huge sparkling cut diamond before which imitation jewels can have no attraction. Where

divine love is present, love for worldly objects must vanish sooner than later, just like water sprayed on a hot sizzling pan. When one gets a drink made from sugar candy does one go in for a drink prepared from cheap molasses? When one moves Eastward, the West by compulsion is left behind.

Offer worship all around to that *virat*, God's manifestation as the physical universe. This worshipful service of the *virat* is the yoga for the present age, a gift of Sri Ramakrishna to modern minds.

Conclusion

As Swami Ranganathananda puts it, spiritual progress can be achieved internally by meditation and externally by service to humanity in the spirit of worship of God. This is the modern approach to yoga. 

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15. See *Gita*, 4.24.
16. *Gospel*, 777.
17. *Complete Works*, 4.494-6.



Yoga Philosophy—Its Aim, Scientific Methods, and Artistic Applications in Life

Swami Kritarthananda

INDIA IS THE BIRTHPLACE of philosophy. Since the dawn of civilisation the best brains in India have been engaged in finding solutions to the intricate problems of life. The ancient seers down the ages have been giving birth to an innumerable number of theories, isms, systems, and philosophies. Even materialist philosophy has found a berth in the list of accepted systems. Whether they are theists, gnostics,

agnostics, Buddhists, Jains, monists, or pluralists—all the systems of philosophy have found a place in the list of philosophies. The book *Sarva-darshana-sangraha* compiled by Madhavacharya has mentioned a few of them. There arose debates among many of the champions of these philosophies from time to time; but such debates were engaged in with a view to founding the supremacy of one's own faith, and not to kill or destroy the upholders of other faiths. This is a distinctive feature of India's great thinkers.

All these philosophies have been thoughtfully

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and broadly classified into six systems of philosophy, namely, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, yoga, Purva-mimamsa, and Uttara-mimamsa or Vedanta. Barring the first two philosophical systems, or rather, the science of logic, the yoga philosophy may be said to be the common denominator of all the other systems. Besides, judging by its methodology, it seems that the yoga system of philosophy forms the main support for all the other systems. For the aspirants in the path of knowledge, devotion, or work, the mainstream of their struggle is to be established in yoga. That is why Sri Krishna said in the Bhagavadgita: 'Therefore, O Arjuna! Be poised in yoga at all times in your life.'¹ Here this word is used in the most comprehensive sense. The demonstration of yogic results is found in the life-stories of almost all spiritual stalwarts. Buddha, Christ, Acharya Shankara, Ramanujacharya, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and many others had recourse to yogic powers for the good of mankind at one time or the other.

In the literary sense, the word means a union of the spiritual aspirant and God. But Sri Krishna gives a wider sense to the word 'yoga' in the Gita, by defining it typically as 'severance from union with pain' (6.23). Indeed, a little reflection reveals the fact that union with God or the supreme Truth implies disunion from all physical, mental, or intellectual 'pains' or *kleshas*. This is one of the salient features that we must keep in mind before taking a holy dip in the yoga system of philosophy.

Distinct Features

The yoga system of philosophy existed long before the Advaita system, and even before the Buddhist systems of philosophy. It was later systematised through aphorisms by Patanjali. This conclusion can be logically arrived at by observing the growing tendency among the Buddhist missionary monks to learn the yoga

system. This system propagated unharmed, and with more popularity down the corridor of time because of its cogent, viable, practical, and scientific approach in its methodology. No other system has such widely acceptable features which can be adopted in a graded course of discipline based on experimental realisation in the soul's journey to its goal. Since this system starts from the very basics, no other prior disciplines for eligibility are required to follow its course.

Another distinct and unique feature of this philosophy is that it can be approached by anyone professing any religion, caste, creed, or sect. For example, from Swamiji's letters we come to know that Pavhari Baba, a great yogi of his time, was originally a Vaishnava monk. Besides, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji, Sri Aurobindo, and almost all the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna attained to extraordinary degrees of concentration in their own paths of sadhana irrespective of the diverse individual bents of their nature. Hence, they may also be called yogis. As a third aspect, this system has no dogma or presupposition of its own, and hence it can easily fit into any system. Its fourth distinct dimension is that even though it is a theistic philosophy, God is not given much importance in the yoga system. As pointed out just now, this system defines yoga, not as union with God, as is commonly understood, but as disunion from all pains. Meditation on God only forms one of the many methods of concentration.²

The goal of yoga is not realisation of God but attainment of one's original Self in the *kaivalya* state through higher concentration, samadhi. This system declares the worship of God as just one of the means—not indispensable—to the realisation of its goal. Many call it an offshoot of Kapila's Sankhya system; but strictly speaking, it may be called as theistic Sankhya system. Unlike Sankhya, this system has a place for God

in it, though its aim is not the attainment of Godhood but samadhi, or the 'complete control over the movements of the mind under all circumstances' (1.2). Patanjali has taken up the concepts of bondage and liberation from the Sankhya system and has defined bondage as the identification with the mental waves that rise incessantly in the mind. Liberation is the attainment of complete freedom from them.

Another special deviation of the yoga system from the Sankhya lies in the method of attainment of its goal. Whereas Sankhya recommends reasoning to reach discrimination, the yoga system prescribes different methods for aspirants with various inclinations.

Yet another salient feature of distinction of the yoga system from all others is that whereas systems like Sankhya and others try to control the gross from the subtlest level, this system conversely prescribes the control of the subtle by starting from the grossest level. This peculiar method has given the yoga system its popularity. One can start with whatever is palpable and within one's grasp. As a concrete demonstration of it we find that by means of pranayama the vital forces inside an individual's body are brought under control; and this in turn controls the pranic forces working outside of one too, because intrinsically the internal and external pranic forces are parts of an integrated whole force system known as Energy. Hence it is so amazing even to the scientific minds of today.

In order to explain this method of going from the gross to the subtle, our ancient sages used to present a beautiful metaphor of a minister incurring the wrath of his master, the whimsical king, and being captivated in a high tower. Seeing his wife weeping at the foot of the tower, the minister jotted down on a note the following instructions to her: 'Bring a honey-bee, a little honey, a very thin thread, then a stronger thread, and

another very thick rope. Smear the bee's head with the honey, tie the thin thread in its hind part, make the insect face upwards, and let it go up.' This was done. When the minister got the insect in his hand, he let it go and caught hold of the thin thread hanging behind it. Then he asked his wife to tie a thicker string to it and next a very thick rope was tied to that string. This being done, the minister got hold of the thickest rope, and with its help got down from the castle and ran away from the kingdom with his wife.

Discussion on the Yoga Aphorisms

Patanjali has aphoristically classified his yoga system in four parts or quartets called padas: samadhi pada, sadhana pada, *vibhuti* pada, and *kaivalya* pada. When an aspirant ventures into an expedition to the yoga system, one must have at least a rough idea about the end, which is samadhi. Without this one would not feel the urge to go ahead and would be confused about the goal. So the first part of the *Yoga Sutra* acquaints the aspirant with several definitions that follow one another, starting from the definition of the term 'yoga.' They have been aphoristically put in succession so as to leave no question unanswered in their trail. In the second part the various practices have been shown. But it is not that the methods, sadhana, have been exclusively provided in the second chapter alone, named sadhana-pada. Rather the first chapter itself has shown some methods of attaining to some lower goals. Thus the second chapter starts with some practices called *kriya* yoga.

The third chapter gives the acquisition of various powers as a result of attainment of perfection in each of the practices. As a side effect of the persistent practice of certain acts some extraordinary powers, *vibhutis*, happen to come to the aspirant. Most of the aspirants who have the hidden desires of getting worldly attainments

are seduced by these powers and thus miss the mark. The fourth chapter is on the final goal, named the *kaivalya* state in yogic parlance. It is not the attainment of oneness because it is beyond one, two, or many. Only the pure witness Self remains. It cannot be described in words. This justifies the name *kaivalya* ascribed to it.

Patanjali starts his aphorisms with this sentence: 'Herewith start the teachings on yoga' (1.1). Then he proceeds to explain the technical term 'yoga' defining it as: 'Yoga is the state of complete control over the *vruttis*' (1.2). What happens when one is in this state? Here comes the answer: 'At that time the witness self stands identified with its real state' (1.3). A question may crop up here as to what happens until that state is arrived? So, the sage explains: 'At other times the practitioner finds himself identified with the *vruttis*' (1.4). *Vruttis* are waves of thought in the lake of the mind.

Maharishi Patanjali



The mind-stuff has been compared here to a huge lake on which waves or ripples arise incessantly due to visible or invisible *samskaras*. When an aspirant tries to withdraw his mind from all thoughts, one cognises these waves arising in the mind due to earlier memories or associations. They may be pain-bearing or without pain, yet they are some or other kinds of waves. The goal of the aspirant is to gain full control on these waves and their subsequent reactions. Patanjali classifies *vruttis* into five categories, namely, *pramana*, right cognition; *viparyaya*, wrong perception; *vikalpa*, cognition about a thing that does not exist; *nidra*, sleep, a mental modification produced by inertia; and *smriti*, memory of the past. Now, all these five types of cognition are either painful or happy for an aspirer for perfection. So, they are named as *klisha* and *aklisha* respectively. The point worth noting here is the step-by-step approach and derivation from one idea to another.

How to get rid of these *vruttis*? The terse reply comes in the twelfth aphorism of the first chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*: 'By practice and detachment they can be stopped' (1.12). The natural tendency of the mind is like a river in tide and ebb, that is, it flows in both good and evil directions. This mind can be trained by persistent practice, *abhyasa*, for the path of discernment by seeing the right and wrong values in all worldly things; and the flow of the mind towards sense objects can be reduced by renunciation, *vairagya*, alone, that is, giving up a lower thing for the pursuit of a higher. Concentration with strong mental, moral, and physical discipline is the aim of such practice. It should always be steadfast. One should never forget that the result of practising evil is bound to be misery, while the practice of good would lead to happiness.

By making the practice and renunciation more intense, one can move towards perfection

with a faster pace. But does everything rest on one's individual efforts alone? No. There are already perfected souls endowed with superhuman qualities resting on higher planes. When one strives to stick to higher thought planes, one's good thoughts become resonant with their similar thoughts and boost up the spiritual aspirant's thought patterns. By taking refuge in them also, one can brave through the various difficulties in spiritual life. Another substitute method has been presented as, '*Ishvara-pranidhanad va*; or by taking refuge in *ishvara*' (1.23). By this word sage Patanjali means that superhuman person who is unaffected by bondage, affliction, deed, results of actions, or the latent impressions thereof, and is omniscient, most sublime, having unsurpassable excellence (1.24–5). He has no limitations, so he is the teacher of all the former teachers. Such an *ishvara* is symbolised verbally by the mystic syllable Om (1.27). By repeating this *pranava* mantra and dwelling on its true meaning, one can also reach *ishvara*. The *Mundaka Upanishad* has depicted beautifully the way to do this: 'Om is the bow; the self is the arrow; Brahman is the target of that arrow. Becoming one with the target like the arrow, the spiritual aspirant should pierce it without a flickering mind.'³ From such repetition comes the awareness of the individual self and the obstacles on the path are removed thereby.

What are these obstacles? They are mostly self-created ones and nine in number, such as disease, incompetence, doubt, delusion, sloth, non-abstention, erroneous conception, non-attainment of yogic state, and inability to stay long in the yogic state after attaining it. These nine are the impediments in each step causing distractions of the mind.⁴ In order to get rid of these impediments, the mind should be focussed on a single goal (1.32). But that can only be done when the mind is calm, pure, and content under all

circumstances. How can that be brought about? The yoga scripture offers a healthy suggestion in the matter. It bids the aspirant to apply antidotes to each type of obstructive ideas that rise in the mind in the course of dealing with others. Seeing others happy, one should have friendliness instead of being taken away by that or trying to dwell on that happiness. Even others' happiness may attract one's mind towards that. Hence the right attitude for keeping the mind unruffled by such distraction is to remain friendly towards the happy people. Similarly, the aspirant's attitude towards those who are in distress should be one of compassion. To those who tread the path of virtue, the attitude of goodwill should be maintained. Likewise, towards those following the dark path of vice, indifference, instead of anger, should be the attitude. This way the aspirant's mind becomes purified from worldly stains.

Another alternative way is through the control of the pranic force working inside the body. By exhaling and restraining the breath outside, the body can be made calm and the mind pure. This is what has been said earlier as control of the subtle by controlling the gross. The mind being on a higher level than the pranic forces, it is more powerful and subtler than the latter. Then, Patanjali proceeds to suggest a number of alternatives aimed at keeping the mind on higher spheres. These alternatives are applicable from time to time as per the mental stability or status of the individual aspirant.

As mentioned earlier, the second chapter is devoted chiefly to practice, *sadhana*. It begins with the acts to be taken up. They are grossly three in number: *tapas*, austerity; *svadhyaya*, study of the sacred literature; and *ishvara-pranidhana*, surrender at the feet of God. Together, these three are named *kriya-yoga* or the union through various acts. Why are these to be taken up? There is a twofold purpose: It minimises

afflictions unavoidable in daily life, *klesha-tanukarana*, and goads the aspirant ahead towards higher meditation called samadhi.

In the context of *vrittis* spoken earlier, we have come across the words *klisha* and *aklisha vrittis*. Here their root term *klesha* is being further explained. They are the miseries of five types created by a person oneself: *avidya*, misapprehension of one's real nature or the world; *asmita*, egoism; *raga*, attachment; *dvesha*, aversion or malice; and *abhinivesha*, fear of death. Of these five the first, that is, *avidya* is the root of all the other four (2.4). Now, this term *avidya* is abstract in this sense and it can only be recognised by its effects. For instance, some people see permanence in impermanent things, purity in the impure things, happiness in miserable things, and Atman in that which is not Atman. This last type of delusion needs further clarification. Those who look upon animate and inanimate objects as part of their own self and rejoice at their prosperity or bemoan their decay are all victims of such delusion termed as *avidya*.

Asmita means confusing the *buddhi* or intellect with pure consciousness. *Raga* or attachment for someone or something rises in the mind following in the memory of pleasure associated with it. Its reverse is *dvesha*, exemplified by anger or propensity to hurt objects inimical to attain, causing misery that were experienced earlier. Lastly, *abhinivesha*, which is found not only in ignorant people but also in the learned, is the inordinate clinging to life and avoiding death. Psychologically it may be termed as the 'fear of annihilation'.

We now come to a very unique proposition of the yoga system which can solve much of our day-to-day problems. Squeezed under adverse circumstances, a person loses faith in himself when, in the poetic words of Swamiji: 'Fate its hundred horrors send, And clotted darkness

block the way.'⁵ One starts blaming someone or the other for one's failure in every endeavour. Swamiji expresses a person's plight in his inimitable words: 'We human beings are very slow to recognise our own weakness, our own faults, so long as we can lay the blame upon somebody else. Men in general lay all the blame of life upon their fellow-men, or, failing that, on God, or they conjure up a ghost, and say it is fate' (2.224). So they rush frantically to the priests, soothsayers, and thus come under their sway. For obvious reasons those professionals take an upper hand on such poor souls. They concoct all imaginary hobgoblins making their subjects weaker in mind and subservient to their evil plans. It is here that the yoga system comes forward and boldly declares: 'Man is the maker of his destiny.' Your own past karmas have given rise to this situation. Henceforth, do virtuous deeds more and more to bring you good results.

Says Swamiji:

Therefore, stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. ... you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed, lays up a store for you and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever (2.225).

In this context, we can compare Swamiji's thoughts with a part of Acharya Shankara's commentary on the Gita: 'There is no possibility of the exhaustion of the results of virtuous deeds that have not as yet begun yielding their fruits. And, as there is the possibility of the persistence of sins that were incurred in the past but have not yet commenced yielding results, similarly

there can be the possibility of the persistence of virtues that have not yet begun bearing fruits.⁶

This great truth of life has been graphically represented by sage Patanjali: 'A person's future birth, span of life, and the experiences therein are controlled and decided by one's deeds done so far.'⁷ Again: 'These birth, span, and experience produce pleasurable or painful results because of virtue and vice' (2.14). The deeds are stored in one's personality and bear fruit irrevocably when they become ripe, and in favourable situations. Thus it is the yoga system of philosophy that teaches to take the whole responsibility of one's deeds on oneself and bids to stand on one's own without passing on the bucks to others. This is a signal point to be borne in mind by all spiritual aspirants that spiritual life starts with the words, 'The buck stops here', meaning, henceforth, 'I will be responsible for all my good or bad deeds and none else'.

Practice and Applications in Life

It is high time to explain the implications, feasibility, and applications of some of the yogic practices contained in the eightfold path prescribed in the second chapter. A method makes a firm seat in the minds of people only when its utility in life is clearly shown. There goes a saying that even a fool cannot be goaded to action until one is convinced of its utility.⁸ Similarly, a path becomes acceptable to the masses to the extent it has its utility in their lives. In recent times, hordes of people are taking to the yoga courses en masse, with a view to gaining good health, tension-free mind, and getting a strongly active autoimmune system. One can even lead a blissful life amidst the din and bustle of workaday world by having recourse to yoga. Yoga improves not only physical health but also endows the aspirant with a strong mind and even sublimates the thought patterns.



We will now give a résumé of the eight limbs of yoga practice or ashtanga-yoga. The related aphorism goes as follows: 'Restraint, observance, posture, regulation of breath, withholding the sense organs, fixing the mind, meditation, and perfect concentration are the eight limbs.'⁹ That is why this yoga is also called ashtanga-yoga or eight-limbed yoga. Now *yama* means the ought-nots and *niyama* means the ought. 'Yama has five aspects, namely, ahimsa, *satya*, *asteya*, brahmacharya, and *aparigraha*' (2.30).

Ahimsa means to abstain from doing harm or injury to others through thought, speech, and deed, and also to develop an attitude of amity towards all creatures. Many people take to a vegetarian diet in order to refrain from killing inferior animals, but if they bear malice, jealousy, revenge, and the like towards their fellow beings, they cannot be given a berth to the ahimsa aspect of *yama*. *Satya* means to stick to truthfulness under all circumstances. It is the effort to

make the mind and speech correspond to the thing which has been correctly apprehended in the practice of truth, that is, saying or thinking of what has been seen, heard, or inferred. Words uttered for the purpose of communicating one's thoughts to others are true provided they do not appear deceitful, delusive, and meaningless to the listeners. Words should be uttered for the benefit of people and not for inflicting harm on them. Truth that is painful or hurting to others should not be spoken. In this context the lawgiver Manu can be remembered for his famous verse which says: 'Truth that is benevolent should be spoken, not an unfair or harmful truth; again, that which is acceptable but actually a falsehood should not be spoken.'¹⁰ Here, one important point should not be lost sight of. In worldly life, sometimes people cannot avoid telling an untruth under certain situations. In that case one should keep in mind the fact that if it is spoken not with a selfish interest but to save a higher and noble purpose, that is not wrong. That untrue statement, which helps serve one's selfish interest is sinful and must be shunned at all costs.

Asteya is abstention from unlawfully taking things that belong to others and not even have a desire to possess it. Brahmacharya or continence is the control of the sense organs in the physical, pranic, and mental levels. It means restraining all sense organs like the eyes from such activities as might cause sexual urge. Our sagacious ancestors said that even to think of sexual things, *smaranam*; to talk about those, *kirtanam*; to flirt, *keli*; to look intently at the physical form of the opposite sex, *prekshanam*; to converse in secret with the opposite sex, *guhyaabhashanam*; to make a resolve of intercourse, *samkalpa*; to get ready for such acts, *adhyavasaya*; and to be engaged in the intercourse, *kriyanirvritti*—all these eight come under the purview of sexuality.¹¹ So, the seekers of salvation should practise the opposites of all these.

In order to achieve this end, the aspirant should try to transcend gradually the physical, pranic, and mental levels and develop a deep love for things higher than those levels. But merely high intellectual achievement, subtlety of intellect, or dwelling in that plane cannot keep one from these things. The intellect has also to be purified. This has been instructed in the *Katha Upanishad* in a mantra. There it is said that this Atman can be realised by a *buddhi*, intellect, which is subtle as well as very sharp like the head of a pin.¹² A brahmachari should maintain a diet of frugal, easily digestible meals and moderate sleep. *Aparigraha* is not to seek or covet, much less cast a glance at, things beyond one's minimal needs. Through discernment the aspirant realises that in keeping things that give us pleasure and enjoyment, one invites trouble in the form of anxiety to preserve them and gets worried or miserable on losing them. Only things needed to maintain the body should be accepted and not a bit more.

Next in turn is *niyama*, which is of five kinds: *shauchah*, purity or cleanliness; *santoshah*, contentment; *tapas*, mental and physical austerity; *svadhyayah*, study of scriptures; and *ishvara-pranidhana*, devotion to god.¹³ *Shaucha* means internal and external purification of the body. The body can be purified by washing, ablution, and the like, with water and other ingredients, and by consuming pure food. This external cleanliness helps the aspirant maintain continence. The mind can be purified by cleansing it of arrogance, conceit, malice, and the like. *Santoshah* is the contentment that comes from whatever one gets for one's mere subsistence. It is the reverse of adding on whatever one needs. People go on craving for more and more objects of enjoyments, which in the long run fetch only misery. King Yayati realised this truth only towards the end of his life and gave out the famous statement: 'Desire for objects can never be appeased by enjoying them

endlessly. It only goes on hopping from one object to another and adding in intensity like fire when clarified butter is added to it.¹⁴

Tapas or austerity is the attempt to desist from actions that might bring momentary pleasures and putting up with the resulting hardship. Practice of austerity for getting only a desired worldly object, is far from yogic austerity. Those who get upset by small sufferings cannot aspire to practise yoga. That is why, endurance has to be practised through the observance of austerities. If one is able to endure hunger and thirst, one is not easily disturbed during meditation. When the body develops the power to endure hardship and when the mind does not get easily upset by lack of physical comfort, one becomes qualified for practising yoga. *Svadhyaya* is to gain deep knowledge of one's adopted spiritual path by the study of scriptures and holy books and uttering the holy mantra Om. It is only through in-depth study that the practice of *shravana*, listening carefully; *manana*, pondering on the meanings; and *nididhyasana*, practising them through meditation come to help the aspirant. *Svadhyaya* also means keenly studying one's inner tendencies. *Ishvara-pranidhana* is total surrender to God of all actions the yogi undertakes by thinking that all endeavours become successful only through God's grace.

Now, the aspirant practising these five kinds of restraint called *yama* has to encounter the inhibitions of perverse thoughts like injuring others by thought, speech, or deed, speaking untruth, stealing, and the like. In yogic parlance these are called *vitarka*. What should a person do under such constraints? The yoga scripture comes forward like a benevolent mother to her child in distress. It says: 'Whenever inhibiting thoughts appear, they are to be countered by opposite thoughts.'¹⁵ It is quite possible that the aspiring one often strays away from one's uniform

struggle. It all happens due to the natural inertia of the mind. Thus, at the arousal of hatred or passion towards worldly things, one should remind oneself of the noble vow one has taken for the well-being of the world. After spitting out none ever licks one's sputum again. So, repetition of the earlier bad tendencies in life should not be allowed if one wants to go upwards. The aspirant should not only refrain from those acts or behaviours, but also should not get those acts done by others, nor even should one approve of those acts seeing others engaged in it.

These are only negative ways of restraining oneself from such inhibiting thoughts. But there are positive sides also. If one is confident of the positive, benevolent effects of practising these qualities of *ahimsa* and the like, one will automatically get rid of the inhibitions. For example, it has been said that when one is established in *ahimsa*, even cruel animals will lose their cruelty towards other species when they come in that person's proximity (2.35). When one gets established in truthfulness, whatever one says comes to happen invariably (2.36). When one gets rooted in the practice of non-stealing even mentally, all the jewels present themselves to such a person (2.37). Being established in *brahmacharya* one acquires unobstructed knowledge, action, special powers like minimising or maximising the body, and others. Such powers are together called *virya* (2.38). When one attains perfection in non-acceptance of more than the bare necessity, the memory and knowledge of the past and the future births arise in him. One comes to know clearly what one was in the past births, and also what glorious future is awaiting one (2.39). These are the positive measures that will goad all aspirants to move ahead in their practices or *sadhana*.

Likewise, the positive and benevolent effects of following the regimen called *niyama* or



observances are also presented in the next few aphorisms. From the practice of purity, *shaucha*, arises the aversion towards one's own body and a distaste for contact with others' bodies (2.40). Purification manifests the potential divinity of the soul, pleasantness of feeling, one-pointedness, subjugation of the senses, and the ability for self-realisation (2.41). From contentment, *santosha*, unsurpassed happiness is gained (2.42). Practice of austerity brings about perfection of the body and the organs (2.43). From study and repetition of scriptures, communion with the chosen ideal is established (2.44). From total surrender to God, one gradually becomes established in the state of samadhi (2.45).

We have been discussing the eight limbs of the yoga system of which the first two, namely *yama* and *niyama*, have been discussed. The next is asana or posture. For yogic practice one has to learn the technique for staying in the same posture for sustained periods without any movement of any part of the body. There are innumerable postures to be mastered, but to serve the purpose of meditation suffice it to say that those postures which are conducive to making the aspirant forget even the existence of one's own body

and help one sit at ease and without movement are known as asanas (2.46). When a posture is perfect, one spontaneously loses all consciousness about the body. It is then that the thought of God comes to one effortlessly. These asanas are to be practised gradually and under the guidance of an expert master. Doing these by force or under a quack posing as a master may result in disaster in the form of malfunction or paralysis of certain parts of the body. As a by-product of perfection in asana, the aspirant ceases to get affected by the pairs of opposites like heat and cold, or other afflictions like hunger or thirst, and so on. The next in turn is pranayama, which should be practised only after mastering in the seating posture. Pranayama is the regulation in the movements of the vital forces working inside the human body through inhalation and exhalation. Pranayama constitutes suspension of breath following either inhalation or exhalation.

One point bears mention in this context. Pranayama as mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* is not identical with what is mentioned in the context of *Hatha* yoga, even though some commentators have tried to make the two correspond. Pranayama practised with a restless mind

cannot be regarded as a part of yoga. Breathing and quietening the mind are to be synchronised together. The technical words *rechaka*, expulsion of air; *puraka*, drawing in of air; and *kumbhaka*, suspension of air, were not used in ancient times in the sense they are understood now. They were coined later. Sage Vyasa in his commentary on the yogic aphorisms has described *bahya-vritti*, external operation, as stopping the pranic force outside after exhalation.¹⁶ This is not the same as *rechaka* mentioned here. Similarly, *abhyantara-vritti*, internal operation, also is a combination of inhalation and suspension of breath. Then there is another operation known as *stambha-vritti*, suppression. It is a form of internal effort which causes internal contraction of all the limbs of the body. After practising this, suspension of breath can be maintained for a long time. In *Hatha* yoga, this is enforced through various *bandhas*, contractions and mudras. But such enforced operation succeeds only in stopping the pranic functions in the body temporarily. It does not stop the activities of the mind.

Next comes *pratyahara*. It is the withdrawal of all the internal and external sense organs that have a natural tendency to rush towards their objects outside. In this process the sense organs are withdrawn from their corresponding objects outside, either by concentration on some higher aspects like the detached mind, or by *pranayama*, or by surrender to God, as already mentioned. Thus having been separated from their corresponding objects, the senses follow the nature of the mind. This is *pratyahara*. But the mind has already recoiled from its function with the world. Hence the senses also cannot but follow suit, like the labourer bees following the course of the queen bee when she leaves her hive for constructing another. Yogic *pratyahara* is entirely self-regulated. When a yogi does not want to know a thing existing outside or inside,

the yogi's power of perception of the object stops immediately.

Thus far, we have discussed the five external practices out of the eight. The next chapter starts with *dharana*. After withdrawing the mind and the senses from all external distractions, it has to be fixed on a particular space like the nerve-centre at navel, heart-centre, tip of the nose or tongue, or space between the brows.¹⁷ When after a long practice in this way the mind gets fixed on certain internal centre as mentioned above, it flows continuously towards that holy object. This uninterrupted flow of the mental modifications is called *dhyana* in yogic parlance. When this practice of unbroken flow becomes firm, gradually the mind, *dhyata*, the objects, *dhyeyah*, and the process of meditation, *dhyana*, lose their difference, and the three become merged into one; that is called *samadhi*, total absorption.

Conclusion


In this article a feeble attempt has been made to acquaint the readers with the basics of yoga philosophy and some of the principal methods. As mentioned in the beginning, yoga has assumed a widespread popularity in today's world of fast life, fast food, and tooth and nail competition. Millions of people from all walks of life are deriving palpable effects from the regular practice of yoga. Many forms of meditation are being taken up by various groups. All these attempts aim at getting peace in the afflicted, sore life. But one point needs mention as a warning in this context. Sitting postures, regulated inhalation and exhalation, and the like may give us a healthy body immune to all diseases. But unless the basic values of ethics and morality are adhered to, those exercises will transform us into human animals.

When Buddhist missionary monks from India went to the far-eastern countries, they

took recourse to some defence arts apprehending violent opposition from the native people. Doesn't it sound strange? How can monks who have taken the vow of non-injury to others have recourse to those martial arts? Still it is true. The Buddhist missionaries got a large number of followers in China, Japan, and other far-eastern countries. Their followers found that the newly imported religion fitted very well into the warp and weft of their old religion like Confucianism and others. Today we find that innumerable kinds of martial arts are spreading like wildfire all over the world. Strictly speaking, those arts are actually extensions and practical applications of yoga. With the passage of time they underwent various modifications in the far-east countries. It is so strange to hear that although the arts have been popularised by the name 'martial arts', in the strictest sense they are the most practical demonstration of keeping the mind calm amidst the busiest place in life, like a duel, or in the battlefield. Karate, Kung Fu, Tae Kwon Do, Tai Chi, and many other such martial arts have developed of late.

What is to wonder at is that the masters of all these martial arts and even of archery and other sciences teach the disciples that the first thing is to keep the mind completely calm, collected, and unruffled by any disturbance or movement. Anger or the idea of revenge should not be nurtured under any circumstances, for such attitudes take away all attention of the mind by force. There should be a blend of lightning speed with fixed aim at the target. In archery, the stages of taking the arrow from the quiver, setting it on the bowstring, fixing the mind on the target, and shooting at the bull's eye—all these details are to be practised with so much alacrity and steadfastness over a long period that finally all these acts taken together become casual and take place in a wink. In duels and

group fights also, with or without weapons, one has to pay attention to every movement of oneself as well as of the opponent. These are undoubtedly great applications of yoga that can challenge the modern world.

Even though a large number of people are using these techniques all over the world, very few among them attain to perfection and master these arts. Many terms have been coined by those masters in association with similar practices like mindfulness, awareness, walking meditation, sitting meditation, and so on. The end and aim of all these modes is nothing but yoga. The demonstration of the Gita by Sri Krishna to Arjuna is nothing but an apt application of yoga amidst the din and bustle of the world. In ancient India, every phase of life used to be looked upon as expressions of yoga. Thus, from the very Vedic period, life itself came to be treated as yoga, that is, a keen attempt to be united with one's real nature, which is DIVINITY. 

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7. *Yoga Sutra*, 2.13.
8. Kumarila Bhatta, *Shlokavartika*, 55: 'Prayojanam an-uddishya mudho'pi na pravartate.'
9. *Yoga Sutra*, 1.29.
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11. See *Daksha Samhita*, Chapter 7.
12. See *Katha Upanishad*, 1.3.12.
13. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.32.
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16. See Vyasa's commentary on Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 2.50.
17. See *Yoga Sutra*, 3.1.



Yoga's Gifts to the Contemporary Western World

Pravrajika Brahmaprana

IT IS NO MISTAKE that Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, his commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, along with his related raja yoga classes, were presented in London and the US, as they comprise one of the Vedanta movement's greatest gifts to the contemporary Western world.

Yoga psychology, the yoga system's study of the science of the mind, is one of the most popular and practical approaches to wellness and to Eastern spirituality in the West today. Yoga's current inroads into the fabric of the US society through yoga studios, integrative medical wellness centers, and psychologists' therapeutic techniques reveal not only the depth of contemporary American interest in yoga psychology, but also point to the need for even further innovations. As yoga practitioners deepen

their spiritual lives and understanding of yoga psychology, more sophisticated and previously unimagined clinical experiments will be devised to inform and advance the healthcare industries' integrative wellness treatments.

With a growing hatha yoga industry in the US that reported 20.4 million US practitioners in 2012 alone,¹ a rising number of yoga enthusiasts acknowledge marked physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual benefits received from their practice. Clinical studies at the Integrative Medicine Center of the top-ranked MD Anderson Cancer Center, in Houston, Texas, show that patients suffering pre- and post-radiotherapy sleep, depression, and cognitive disturbances benefited significantly from yoga techniques.² Furthermore, today a growing number of psychotherapists engage their clients in some kind of mindfulness-based meditation practice as a stress-reduction, centring, or depression relapse

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prevention technique.³ Consequently—whether interested in spirituality, yoga, integrative approaches to medicine, health, or mental wellness—many Westerners find their way to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* to deepen their understanding. Here sincere seekers can find a clear, systematic approach to entering the laboratory of the mind to study, master, and transcend the mind.

In *Raja Yoga* Swamiji teaches an unprecedented, multi-disciplined approach to the *Yoga Sutra* by introducing the yoga philosophy's paradigm of the mind alongside the tantric school's kundalini system of the seven chakras and hatha yoga's science of pranayama, references of which can also be found in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*.⁴ By doing so, the reader receives a holistic view of our psycho-physical being—its mind-body connection—how all the functions and powers of the body, mind, and senses are manifestations of the force of prana. Hence, our one life-force—operating as vital energy, nerve currents, and thought-waves—can through yoga be collectively purified and channelled to operate in synchrony as a gigantic battery of will, capable of unleashing the latent superconscious power within us all. Swamiji explains:

We have to get hold of that which is setting the whole engine in motion. That is the Prana, the most obvious manifestation of which is the breath. Then, along with the breath, we shall slowly enter the body, which will enable us to find out about the subtle forces, the nerve currents that are moving all over the body. As soon as we perceive and learn to feel them, we shall begin to get control over them, and over the body. The mind is also set in motion by these different nerve currents, so at last we shall reach the state of perfect control over the body and the mind, making both our servants. Knowledge is power. We have to get this power.⁵

Swamiji further expands our holistic perspective by presenting yoga's cosmic-centred

vision that the force within our psycho-physical being is connected with the force pervading the entire universe:

In an ocean there are huge waves, like mountains, then smaller waves, and still smaller, down to little bubbles, but back of all these is the infinite ocean. The bubble is connected with the infinite ocean at one end, and the huge wave at the other end. So, one may be a gigantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is connected with that infinite ocean of energy, which is the common birthright of every animal that exists. Wherever there is life, the storehouse of infinite energy is behind it (1.156).

Yoga's system of philosophy that correlates the spiritual heart of each being with the innermost plane of a cosmic ocean of space, vibrating with prana at the highest degree of spiritual vibration, and available to all, resonates with a growing holistic Western worldview of the web of life in a material-cum-spiritual world. This perspective embraces an acknowledgement of the underlying interconnectivity of all life forms,⁶ which ultimately leads many beyond to Vedanta's expansive awareness of the principle of unity in diversity and oneness, one consciousness pervading all.

Furthermore, yoga's path to Self-realisation is experimental and experiential that attracts freedom-loving Americans, many of whom or whose parents had left their dogma-bound, no-questions-asked family religion during the Great Church Exodus of the 1960s and 70s.⁷

Another gift from Swamiji's *Raja Yoga* and related talks and classes are a number of meditations that he shared with his Western students. To this day US audiences appreciate these guided meditations, usually given at Vedanta centres or informal satsangs. However, they are also shared in other public venues: for example, in the last few years at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School's 'Religion and Medicine' course in Dallas, Texas. As an introduction to Hinduism, the

university medical students were presented with an experiential practice to determine 'Who am I?' For the most part, the students accepted the Yoga-Vedanta premise that 'I am not the body' when led down a natural line of inquiry such as:

'Does your I-consciousness remain from childhood to adulthood?'

'Yes.'

'Does it remain if you lose a limb or have an organ transplant?'

'Yes.'

But when the students were presented with the next yoga-Vedanta premise, 'I am not the mind', they balked, that is, until they participated in Swamiji's 'Calming the Lake of the Mind' meditation, based on the ancient Sankhya, yoga, and Vedanta mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness Meditation: Calming the Lake of the Mind

Picture the mind as a calm lake stretched before you ... [See] the thoughts that come and go as bubbles rising and breaking on its surface. Make no effort to control the thoughts, but watch them and follow them in imagination as they float away. ... Hold to the idea, 'I am not the mind, I see that I am thinking, I am watching my mind act.'⁸

Hold fast to the idea, 'I am the witness watching my mind drifting. The mind is not I.' ... see it ... as ... a thing entirely apart from yourself. Identify yourself with God, never with matter or with the mind (8.47).

From this five- or ten-minute exercise, some of the medical students discovered and discerned for themselves several outcomes as follows.

First, this mindfulness meditation is somehow calming and centring; the meditator is not whisked away by every thought. Correspondingly, one's breathing becomes slower and steadier, and, in the process, the meditator gains a certain sense of detachment and self-mastery—a feeling of well-being that can be palpably felt.

Second, the meditator cannot help but notice that during the meditation there are two minds, as it were, operating: the observer mind and the observed mind.

Third, when the medical students were faced with the axiomatic scientific fact that anything that can be observed is matter and is, therefore, impermanent, they had to agree. When it then followed that for that reason in the Eastern paradigm of the mind, mind is considered subtle matter, the students remained silent and thoughtful.

A fourth outcome of the mindfulness practice is that by perceiving the mind, the meditator can rationally conclude that if I *can* and *do* perceive the mind, it necessarily follows: I *have* a mind, but I *am not* the mind. The medical students could not disagree with this logic. They listened closely when informed that dedicated aspirants can deepen their meditation practice to a point wherein they begin to intuit firsthand that the mind distorts the reflection of the Purusha, as a lake ruffled by the wind distorts the image of the sun.⁹

A fifth outcome occurs over time when this mindfulness practice is performed even briefly before one's regular meditation; then a practitioner begins to observe the normally hidden, subconscious thoughts and emotions within the mind that are actually fuelling one's actions.

At that point in spiritual life, we become aware of some of the samskaras or tendencies, that have up until then lurked within and manipulated us beneath the surface of our conscious mind. With the help of yoga disciplines, we are then able to begin applying and re-applying counter thoughts¹⁰ to attenuate these negative forces that block the spiritual current within us and, in that way, begin to make marked progress in our spiritual lives.

Sixth, when the daily habit of calming the lake of the mind becomes second nature, we find that we can tune in to the mind throughout the

day and calm it whenever necessary with the appropriate spiritual antidotes.

Over time we may even ask ourselves *who* is the mind's seer?—and come to the realisation that our mindfulness meditation intuitively but can only *point* to the witness-consciousness itself. Yoga, from the Vedantic standpoint, means complete union; therefore, the subject and the object no longer exist.

Eastern Paradigm of the Mind

Another gift of *Raja Yoga* is the Eastern paradigm of the mind. It is such a sophisticated depiction of the mind that after studying it, an aspirant can begin to label, contextualise, and thereby objectify and understand with detachment her or his mental *kleshas*, afflictions, and then practise yoga remedies to systematically master them.

The *Yoga Sutra* gives us an invaluable map of the mind. The mind is like a lake. The Purusha or Self, is the lake bottom and the lake itself is the *chitta*, mind-stuff, composed of *manas*, recording faculty; *buddhi*, discerning faculty; and *ahamkara*, egoism. Like a cauldron of water, the *chitta* is colourless, odourless, and without shape; but it takes on the form of thoughts and perceptions and other activities that arise within it. Any sense perception, thought, emotion, or memory arises as a *vrutti*, thought wave; literally, 'whirlpool', in our *chitta*. And hundreds of such *vruttis*, or movements, occur within our *chitta* during the waking state. They stir its surface waters, muddy it, and send out ripples that are electrically charged, which refract and reflect the non-Self and conceal the lake bottom, which is the Self. And these *vruttis* are stored in a subtle form in the *chitta* as memory.

The yoga science of mind clearly demonstrates how any thought process creates an opportunity or tendency, for us to repeat it. This tendency is called a *samskara*. *Samskaras* form habits, which create an individual's character. For example, if

someone insults us we naturally become angry. From the yoga perspective, that reaction is like a pebble, as it were, dropped into the lake of our mind, the *chitta*. And each time we remember that insult, its memory reawakens our anger and another pebble is dropped into the lake. If we remember such an incident thirty times a day over twenty-five years' time, imagine the pebble deposit; it becomes a huge pebble embankment!

With this comprehensive paradigm of the mind and its inner workings, we who may harbour such resentments can begin to realise why it takes so little to trigger our anger. From the beginning we had allowed a single incident—one thought—to create the tendency of anger that impelled us to repeat that anger *vrutti* until it eventually became a habit; and that habit eventually formed our character: What happened? We then became known as an 'angry person'. In this way, *Raja Yoga* shows us step-by-step how we become a victim of our senses.

When we first understand the mental process, we can then develop the will to attenuate our negative tendencies with yoga techniques—a will that can be strengthened by a further understanding of yoga-Vedanta epistemology.

The Nature of Perception

Yoga's metaphysical understanding of perception is yet another gift to the world. According to yoga-Vedanta when we perceive a sense object, the *chitta* pours out to the object through the two orifices of our eyes and totally encompasses it. That perception responds back to the mind as light and vision. Our sense organ carries this to the optic nerve in the brain centre, and a visual form reposes in the brain. In other words, our mind-stuff, the *chitta*, takes the form of the object of our vision; we *be* and *become* that perception. The *chitta*, like water, encompasses what is perceived and ingested by the five senses.

It follows that what we *think*, we *become*. Our thought holds an object in the *chitta*. And the more we think of that object, the more we saturate our self with the idea of that object. Just as water melts whatever is solvent such as sugar, while retaining the taste of sugar, so also the *chitta* retains the 'aftertaste' or subtle quality of any sense object ingested through the senses and absorbed into the 'waters' of the mind. In this way, the sense object saturates the *chitta*.

Yoga tells us that if that is the source of our bondage, why not take advantage of that methodology? Why not try to find an object that most closely resembles or accurately symbolises our true original nature, concentrate on that object, and slowly *be* and *become* that? Why not make that our habit, by asserting our will and gathering the forces of the mind within?

Why not allow only those *vruttis* to form in the mind that are logical, rational, and spiritually elevating? Then systematically plant those ideas in the mind and become involved with those ideas to such an extent that all other *vruttis* diminish. When only those remain that are connected with our true original nature, we will lose our sense of time and space. Why? Because the concept of time exists with change. Next, we lose our concept of space, because our *vruttis* are limited

and so also change itself is limited. When only one *vrutti* remains, 'Thou, O Lord', we lose the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Only our heart's beloved remains, and we *be* and *become* our chosen ideal.

By entering the laboratory of mind, we watch and understand the nature of the mind. With this practice comes knowledge and power. Then by skilfully gathering the powers of the mind, with the help of the higher mind we use the mind to control, master, and ultimately transcend the mind.

Yoga Practices, Psychotherapy, and Neuroscience

Contemporary psychotherapists have much to gain by informing their psychological counselling with the yoga paradigm of the mind, its mindfulness meditations, and certain yoga practices that help master negative tendencies of the mind. To briefly recap, through mindfulness meditations such as Swamiji's calming the lake of the mind, a meditator uses the higher mind as an instrument to watch the lower mind. In that way, the practitioner stops identifying with the lower mind, knowing 'I am not the mind', and can then gain mastery over the lower mind with certain yoga techniques culled from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*.

Mindfulness practices have been successively



used in experiments with patients suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).¹¹ In one experiment Jeffrey Schwartz and his colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) instructed patients obsessed by compulsive thoughts to think: ‘My brain is generating another obsessive thought. Don’t I know it is just some garbage thrown up by a faulty circuit?’ Furthermore, the array of psychotherapeutic techniques Schwartz’s team used to help detach their patients from their thoughts unmistakably resembles yoga practices, such as: (1) ‘Relabelling’; (2) ‘Reattributing’, whereby the patients tell themselves ‘It’s not me—it’s my OCD’, which from the yoga perspective would be self-talk such as: ‘I *have* a mind, but I am *not* the mind’; (3) ‘Refocusing’, which a yoga practitioner would call mindful counter-thoughts; and (4) ‘Revaluing’, which is also a recognisable internal yoga practice of ‘being the witness’, but termed in psychotherapeutic language as becoming an ‘impartial spectator’.

In Schwartz’s experiment, ‘After 10 weeks of mindfulness-based therapy, 12 out of 18 patients improved significantly. Before-and-after brain scans showed that activity in the orbital frontal cortex, the core of the OCD circuit, had fallen dramatically and in exactly the way that drugs effective against OCD affect the brain. Schwartz called it “self-directed neuroplasticity”.’¹²

We also see how other experimental results with cognitive psychology techniques, consciously or unconsciously aligned with ancient yoga practices and supported by neuroscience, show how the mind can change the brain. Helen Mayberg conducted a University of Toronto experiment on the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) compared with various antidepressant medicines. The research findings were interesting: ‘CBT muted overactivity in the frontal cortex, the seat of reasoning, logic and higher thought as well as of endless rumination about

that disastrous date. Paroxetine, by contrast, raised activity there. On the other hand, CBT raised activity in the hippocampus of the limbic system, the brain’s emotion center. Paroxetine lowered activity there. As Toronto’s Helen Mayberg explains, “Cognitive therapy targets the cortex, the thinking brain, reshaping how you process information and changing your thinking pattern. It decreases rumination, and trains the brain to adopt different thinking circuits” (ibid.). The overall results demonstrated that ‘While the two treatments worked in different ways, they had a similar net effect.’¹³ According to Mayberg: ‘Cognitive therapy targets the cortex, the thinking brain, reshaping how you process information and changing your thinking pattern. It decreases rumination, and trains the brain to adopt different thinking circuits.’¹⁴ As with Schwartz’s OCD patients, thinking had changed a pattern of activity—in this case, a pattern associated with depression in the brain.

When we analyse such data, we cannot help but deduce the psychologically therapeutic effects of raja yoga. Let’s explore more deeply the connection between cognitive behaviour therapy and yoga techniques, and their outcomes. The cognitive behaviour therapy technique of ‘reframing’ is one of the most frequently used methods in modern psychotherapy, as it provides a new, healthier frame of reference through which clients can then view themselves in the context of their world, their family, friends, and co-workers.¹⁵

The psychologist first identifies the client’s frame of reference and world view. For example, the frame of reference for a person with low self-esteem could be a recurring underlying thought, such as ‘I’m worthless.’ The psychologist then selects the client’s specific behaviours that support such low self-esteem. For example, the client may have an alcoholic addiction, which can cause a cascading syndrome of lying, stealing, erratic behaviours, and drunken driving.

Third, the psychologist then collects background material that provides new frames to fit the client's problem, such as, in this example, contemporary medical research on alcoholism that identifies alcoholism as a disease, rather than a character defect, along with literature on the Twelve-step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous that provides the path to recovery from this illness. Together, the research and recovery program help to 'reframe' the client's acceptance of her or his alcoholism by constructively 're-labelling' it as a disease—a disease, which thus has a treatment and a cure.

Fourth, the psychologist introduces the 'reframe', and the client begins to reframe her or his own malady with such self-talk as, 'I am not my disease. I *have* a disease. And there is a cure.' In therapy sessions, the therapist begins to 're-attribute' the client's subsequent negative thoughts and actions that stem from the core problem: the patient's alcoholism.

Yoga scriptures, such as the Bhagavadgita, masterfully reframe human addiction, by systematically identifying how the generic human mind works. In the Gita, Sri Krishna explains to his disciple Arjuna:

Thinking about sense-objects
Will attach you to sense-objects;
Grow attached, and you become addicted;
Thwart your addiction, it turns to anger.
Be angry and you confuse your mind;
Confuse your mind,
you forget the lesson of experience;
Forget experience, you lose discrimination.
Lose discrimination,
and you miss life's only purpose.¹⁶

For example, suppose we are out walking and spot an expensive watch in a shop window. Naturally we admire and appreciate the precision of such a fine piece of jewellery. That appreciation matures into the desire to possess it. Next our mind begins to calculate *how* to possess it,

based on a stockpile of past habits, *samskaras*. One person might think: 'Let me take out my savings to pay for it.' Another might think: 'Let me borrow some money from a friend.' And yet another may try to devise a scam in order to buy it. All the while, we are saturating our self with desire, filling the *chitta* with the craving to call the watch 'my own'. We thus become infatuated and enslaved by the watch.

The first casualty is when rationality is thrown out the window—when my *chitta* belongs to the object of my desire. Then no more am I the master of myself; I have mortgaged myself to the *vritti*: 'I *must* have the watch. No, I'm *entitled* to it!' The object has taken total control of my being. And discrimination has vanished.

What is the solution? Yoga psychology tells us to ignore such thoughts. Don't pay attention; don't show interest. Cognitive behaviour therapy would call this 'refocusing'. For example, suppose we are walking down the street, and out of the corner of our eye we see a stray cat on the sidewalk. If we keep walking, the cat sits still and watches us. But as soon as we turn and look at the cat, the cat begins to follow us. Desires are like that; if we ignore them, they diminish and eventually disappear; but if we pay attention or show interest, they hook themselves to our mind.

Once Matt, a young man in his early thirties who happened to suffer from schizophrenia, confided that he had a problem with self-cutting. I asked him why, and he explained that there was a voice in his head, which he called 'Lucy', who repeatedly advised him to do such self-hurting behaviours. Alarmed, I suggested to his parents that they find a good therapist for Matt—preferably one who was established in one of the dharma traditions, Hinduism or Buddhism—which they thankfully did. After a year, Matt came to visit me, and I asked him about his problem of self-cutting.

'I no longer do that,' he said.

'That's wonderful!' I replied, 'but how did that change happen?'

'I don't hear Lucy's voice anymore.'

'Really? Why not?'

'My psychiatrist told me to pay no attention to her. So, I stopped listening, and she disappeared.'

I was flabbergasted. When we no longer energeise the lower mind by identifying with it, we can stop our compulsive, involuntary thoughts.¹⁷ If a schizophrenic can do this, why can't we? Yoga psychology's methodology is a priceless gift for all.

Deepening Yoga's Inroads into the West

For those practitioners, who understand the benefits of yoga—its sophisticated paradigm of the mind, mindfulness meditation practices, yoga techniques to gain mastery of the mind, and systematic stages of concentration leading to meditation, and ultimately the attainment of Self-realisation—there are many opportunities to develop new or deepen yoga's existing inroads into Western society to improve its physical, emotional, and mental healthcare system and deepen inquiring seekers' spiritual well-being.

For example, more clinical studies using rehabilitative yoga techniques can be performed in the field of medicine. Dr Alejandro Chaoul, at the Department of Palliative, Rehabilitation, and Integrative Medicine at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Centre, recently shared a remarkable discovery that shows profound possibilities in the field of yoga. During a visiting lecture at Texas Christian University, in March 2018, he mentioned that recovering women cancer patients, who had suffered marked cognitive loss from radiation treatment, volunteered for a clinical study wherein they were asked to participate in Tibetan chanting sessions using three

powerful Tibetan seed mantras, two of which were also the familiar Hindu seed words 'Om' and 'Hum'. The results of the research determined a marked increase in the patients' cognitive ability as opposed to those women who did not participate in the study.¹⁸

More clinical studies gauging the therapeutic effects of Sanskrit mantras *could* and *should* take place. However, this would entail the imagination, innovation, and service-mindedness of medical doctors who are yoga-Vedantins and, at the same time, willing to pursue such a worthwhile cause.

The second example has already gained a head start. Because hatha yoga is such a natural introduction to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* and Swamiji's *Raja Yoga*, various Vedanta centres in the West have allocated a room for traditionally trained yoga instructors to present their daily or weekly classes. However, at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Center in Gretz, France, when a number of years ago rotating hatha yoga instructors were first allowed to hold classes at the centre, Swami Veetamohananda stipulated that each instructor must also present a five- or ten-minute talk on one of the *Yoga Sutra's yamas* or *niyamas*, thus injecting the yoga system of philosophy into the Vedanta centre's hatha yoga class initiative.

Then in an all-day program on International Day of Yoga, in June 2016, the Vedanta centre invited about forty yoga instructors from various yoga traditions to guide 1,000 attendees in yogasana sessions at numerous venues on the twenty-acre ashrama property. It was such a success, that the following year, on Yoga International Day, Swami Veetamohananda collaborated with UNESCO to deepen the content of the yoga instructors' asana sessions by incorporating yoga-Vedanta elements into two specific types of sessions which were then exclusively presented: one, Vedic *kriya*-yoga and the other, yoga *nidra*.

For the Vedic *kriya*-yoga sessions,

Veetamohananda gave the hatha yoga instructors specific topic headings, centred around one of the three aspects of *sat-chit-ananda*. For example, some *kriya*-yoga sessions were entitled: 'Sat: the courage to be'; 'Chit: awakening the *buddhi*'; or 'Ananda: love incarnate', and so on. After each yoga instructor chose her or his preferred topic(s) for their session(s), the instructors' tasks were then to choreograph each of their *yogasana* sessions in a way that would help awaken within the practitioners a meditative insight into the meaning of the topic heading itself.

Each of the Vedic *kriya*-yoga sessions were first introduced with a fifteen-minute *nyasa*, purification of the body with Sanskrit mantras; followed by a guided meditation 'on the luminous light, as in radiating coals, within the heart'; and, finally, an overall purification of the body, prana, mind, sense organs, five sheaths, Atman, and so on, with Sanskrit mantras chanted from the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad*.

The yoga teachers then led their students through their choreographed *asana* sessions of *sat*, *chit*, or *ananda*. At the end of the sessions, a research questionnaire was handed out to all attendees, and the results were tallied at the end of the day's program and presented before Veetamohananda, the Mayor of Gretz, the Ambassador to UNESCO, and the attendees in the all-day program.

The yoga *nidra* sessions, also created by Veetamohananda, were designed to specifically instil within the instructor and practitioner the original meaning of yoga *nidra*—not the misconstrued deep state of relaxation which many Western yoga instructors teach. In the yoga system, yoga *nidra* is a state of *savikalpa samadhi*;¹⁹ whereas in Vedānta, yoga *nidra* is a state of witnessing the three states of consciousness. As Swami Shridharananda, the head of the Vedānta Centre of Sydney, explained: 'Once as a young monk, Swami Hiranmayananda went

to offer *pranam* to Swami Vijnanananda in his room at Belur Math. He greeted Vijnanananda: "Maharaj, how did you sleep?" Vijnanananda responded: "Do you know how I sleep? I quiet the mind and then withdraw my prana into the heart and then focus on the infinity of the Atman and dissolve into that." "Oh", replied the young monk, "We don't have to go to so much trouble!"²⁰

Swami Turiyananda also practised entering deep sleep knowingly, a state of *samadhi* wherein the dreamless state is experienced as an awareness of primordial ignorance. When one remains conscious between the waking and sleep states, ignorance is destroyed. However, having witnessed the three states of consciousness, Turiyananda lost the capacity to sleep and eventually had to stop his yoga *nidra* practice.²¹

Based on the authentic yoga and Vedānta interpretations of yoga *nidra*, Veetamohananda designed the entire one-hour yoga *nidra* session, given on the International Day of Yoga, to include yoga elements that would help refer the practitioner to yoga *nidra*'s original meaning—an expansive superconscious state. First the meditation began with a chanting of the Gayatri mantra; followed by a meditation on pure consciousness as a vibratory, luminous presence—the background canvas of infinite space; followed by a meditation on prana, as a force of pure energy that is breathed in and expelled as pure love in order for the practitioner to feel an expansive sense of peace and harmony within and without; next was performed a *nyasa* of the hands and body, accompanied by sacred *bijas*, seed mantras; followed by the *bhūta śuddhi*, an impersonal meditation within the yoga tradition, accompanied by the appropriate mantras chanted aloud; and finally, in the *śavasana* posture, the practitioner was then led in a guided meditation on the symbology of the *aśvattha*, fig tree, the inverted tree of life—its divine

symbology poetically expanded to embrace and encompass the yoga practitioner:

Visualise the cosmic tree's leaves,
which vibrate universal life
emanating from its roots above.

The life force is pure love which manifests itself as joy and happiness.

Feel the vibration of joy and happiness everywhere in the universe and within yourself.

Each cell and molecule of your being is the expression of this infinite joy and happiness. ...

Step by step, each meditator was then guided to raise her or his consciousness, using the *ashvattha* tree's symbology:

By elevating your consciousness,
your connection to pure consciousness
is amplified; and light emanates from
the top roots, withdrawing little by little from
the bottom branches.

By the elevation of consciousness comes detachment; consciousness withdraws little by little from the world below to dedicate itself to the contemplation of the infinite Source of life.

By the elevation of consciousness,
the 'desire' branches gradually lose
their intensity and fall away. ...

Through the power of guided meditations and by injecting a yoga-Vedanta narrative into the yoga *nidra* and Vedic *kriya*-yoga asana sessions, the practitioners—many of whom were newcomers to Vedanta—discovered that they received a uniquely elevated experience from their yoga sessions, which they then candidly shared through the UNESCO research questionnaire and which inspired a large number of them to deepen their individual spiritual practices.

Because of its success at the Vedanta centre in Gretz, in June 2018, Veetamohananda


introduced the yogasana program at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas, in Dallas, Texas, USA—but this time as a two-day holistic yoga workshop with two Vedic *kriya*-yoga asana sessions and one yoga *nidra* session, interspersed with nine talks on yoga-Vedanta, followed by question-and-answer sessions, and altogether four nondual guided meditations.

The workshop audience, two-thirds of which were Vedantins and one-third newcomers, responded with dedicated concentration to the workshop talks and asana sessions. Many expressed a desire for another such workshop in the future, a newfound desire to conduct their life more responsibly, and a desire to deepen their own spiritual practice.

In the research questionnaire, a newcomer shared: 'I felt a stronger connection to others [by focusing on] the infinite; [I felt] more love, less feeling towards others as [being] strange or foreign.' Other practitioners shared that they felt a sense of 'centring', 'connectedness', 'expansion', 'purification', 'strength', 'loving kindness', even 'joy'. One felt 'an increased presence of the essence of the universal and universal unity'.

All three of the yoga instructors were classically trained, but only one was a Vedantin; another was a Buddhist, though a student of the *Yoga Sutra*, and the third showed an avid beginner's interest in yoga-Vedanta by studying the *Yoga Sutra* and listening to online yoga-Vedanta lectures before and after the workshop. Undoubtedly, these yoga instructors will use what they gained from the holistic yoga workshop to teach their present and future yoga students in the years to come.

Through such initiatives, experienced teachers or long-time lay Vedantins can use their knowledge and spiritual imaginations to create other successful innovative experiments and effective ways for yoga techniques to enhance our physical,

mental, and spiritual health or our profession, hobby, or talent. When Americans then adopt or begin to engage with such innovations, gifted from another religious tradition such as yoga, which improve their quality of life, they become enriched in ways that can enhance and broaden the way they look at themselves and the world. That is how any of us change our thoughts, our way of thinking, and even our way of life. Barriers are lowered between the West and the East and, in the process, non-Hindus discover for themselves the beauty and depth of an ancient spiritual tradition such as yoga. 

Notes and References

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2. See Chelsea G Ratcliff, et al, 'Examining Mediators and Moderators of Yoga for Women with Breast Cancer Undergoing Radiotherapy', *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 15/3 (September 2016), 250–62 <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1534735415624141>> accessed 28 November 2018.
3. Yoga psychology workshop on 'Tools for Life'. Talk by Yoga Vedantin psychotherapist Brad Brager on 'Mindfulness as a Therapeutic Tool', delivered at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas, 16 November 2013.
4. See Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 2.49–51.
5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.144.
6. See Sandy Olliges, 'Deep Ecology and Evolution of Consciousness: Part 1 of 5—Deep ecology's holistic view promotes healing of the planet', *Psychology Today*, 30 May 2013 <<https://tinyurl.com/y8oswxr4>> accessed 28 November 2018; and 'Indigenous Peoples Worldviews vs Western Worldviews', *Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples*, 26 January 2016 <<https://tinyurl.com/y7cuzo8k>> accessed 28 November 2018.
7. During the 1960s and 70s, sixty to seventy per cent of Christians and Jews in the US left their churches and synagogues.
8. *Complete Works*, 8.48.
9. From the yoga philosophy perspective, the mind is considered other than the Purusha, therefore, the mind contains and distorts a reflection of the Purusha. Though most Vedantins would agree with yogis that the mind distorts the reflection of the Atman or Purusha, from a higher standpoint, an Advaitin could say that the mind is a distorted reflection of the Atman. As Sri Ramakrishna said: 'The pure mind [Atman] and pure intellect [*buddhi*] are one and the same. God is known by the pure mind.' (M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 726.)
10. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.33.
11. See Jeffrey M Schwartz and Rebecca Gladding, *You Are Not Your Brain* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011).
12. Sharon Begley, 'The Brain: How the Brain Rewires Itself', *Time*, 19 January 2007 <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1580438-3,00.html>> accessed 28 November 2018.
13. S Dingfelder, 'CBT may stabilize over-activity in higher-order brain areas', *Monitor on Psychology*, 35/4 (April 2004), 11.
14. 'The Brain: How the Brain Rewires Itself'.
15. See Wayne Perry, *Basic Counseling Techniques: A Beginning Therapist's Toolkit* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008), 61.
16. *The Song of God: Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor, 1958), 42.
17. See Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, (Novato: Namaste, 2004), 16.
18. See 'Examining Mediators and Moderators of Yoga for Women with Breast Cancer Undergoing Radiotherapy'.
19. See *The Life of Swami Adbutananda as We Saw Him*, trans. Swami Satswarupananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2011), 209.
20. Swami Sridharananda's private reminiscences given to Pravrajika Brahmaprana, in Dallas, Texas, USA, October 2009.
21. Reminiscences of Swami Prabhavananda at the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, California in the early 1970s.



Is There Yoga in Bhakti Yoga?

Pravrajika Shuddhatmaprana

THE WORD 'YOGA' literally means union. So we can understand that jnana yoga is union with the divine through jnana, or knowledge; and raja yoga is union with the divine through spiritual practices. But what about bhakti yoga? Is union with God through devotion the goal of bhakti yoga? We often find that the followers of the path of devotion consider the idea of union with God to be blasphemous. For example, the Bhagavata gives these words of the Lord: 'Such devotees do not accept, even when offered, any of the five forms of liberation, moksha: *salokya*, living in God's sphere; *sarshti*, having God's powers; *samipya*, living close to God; *sarupya*, having a form similar to God, and *sayujya*, being one with God. The only thing they want is the opportunity to render loving service to me.'¹

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Sri Chaitanya was severe in his criticism of all these forms of mukti. He said: 'Devotees reject the five kinds of muktis; they consider mukti to be insignificant and equal to hell.'² In Sri Chaitanya's mind, true devotees should not desire any enjoyment of the bliss of God for themselves. As the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* says: 'The bliss of selfish love obstructs the bliss of the service of Sri Krishna, and towards that [selfish] bliss there is great anger in the [true] devotee. ... And the pure devotee does not cling to *salokya* and the rest, forsaking the service of the love of Sri Krishna, with one's own pleasure as one's end' (1.4.201, 1.4.204). That is, the true devotee only desires to give joy to the Lord through loving service, and if that service is hampered in any way by the devotee's enjoyment of bliss, then that enjoyment is to be shunned.

As the Bhagavata indicates, those who follow the path of devotion have as their goal to

live in an eternal relationship with the Lord and to serve the Lord eternally in that relationship. Transformation of one's individual consciousness, rather than absorption in the supreme Consciousness, is considered the goal. In fact, such devotees will go so far as to say that this is a higher state than being merged in supreme Consciousness. So is there really union, yoga, in bhakti yoga?

First of all, we can say that, whether or not devotees would accept the state of *sayujya*—yoga, or being united with the Lord, the fact is, the Bhagavata is plainly stating here that it *is* possible. The Bhagavata is not denying the possibility of this state; rather, it is saying that true devotees don't want it. But do all teachers of the devotional paths agree with this? Again, what is the goal for these teachers of bhakti yoga? We shall go back to these points later, but first we shall discuss the more common meaning of the word 'yoga' and also see how it is related to bhakti or devotion.

Here we should note that the word 'yoga' is used more often to refer to the path, rather than to the goal. That is, the word usually refers to the practices that take us to our spiritual goal. In this sense, the word 'yoga' is perfectly justified, as Patanjali himself uses it in this sense. He refers to his aphorisms that describe the graduated path of spiritual disciplines as *Yoga Sutra*.

As Swami Vivekananda points out in his *Bhakti Yoga*, not everyone who is inclined towards the path of devotion is ready for the highest experiences and realisations of devotion, whatever form they may take. This is why we must take up spiritual practices, preparatory practices, to make us ready for spiritual experiences of any kind, whether of union or not. In fact, these preparatory practices are the foundation of bhakti yoga. The same can be said for those aspirants following the paths of jnana yoga and raja yoga. Realisations are at the highest level, while the

path is meant to prepare us for these realisations. So there is no harm in calling these preparatory practices on the devotional path 'yoga'.

In fact, many of the preparatory practices for all these paths are similar. In raja yoga, for instance, the aspirant follows the eight steps of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*: *yama*, non-violence, and the like; *niyama*, cleanliness, and the like; *asana*, postures for sitting; *pranayama*, controlling the breath; *pratyahara*, controlling the sense organs and turning them inward; *dharana*, concentration; *dhyana*, meditation; and *samadhi*, the goal of meditation. The first two, *yama* and *niyama*, are basic for any spiritual aspirant, following any path. They are purificatory practices. Without a firm foundation in these, no amount of meditation or other spiritual practice is of any avail. Moreover, we find that in these practices, there is an emphasis on God's worship.

Yama consists of five steps: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-covetousness. *Niyama* consists of: cleanliness, external and internal; contentment; austerity; study, and this includes the repetition of a sacred mantra—such as, in raja yoga, the sacred word Om; and worship of God, which primarily consists of surrendering the fruits of our actions to God.

The rest of the eight steps of Patanjali's yoga system are also generally followed by those practising bhakti yoga, though there is no rule about this. *Asana* refers to a sitting posture that is steady and comfortable in order to allow one to meditate. Regarding *pranayama*, control of the breath, Sri Ramakrishna often said that absorption in a devotional mood will automatically bring about *kumbhaka*, suspension of breath, which is the goal of *pranayama*. The other stages of meditation—*pratyahara*, *dharana*, and *dhyana*—are generally practised, though they also come naturally when a person gets more and more absorbed in a devotional mood.

Pratyahara literally means to turn the sense organs inward to be absorbed in the mind. *Dhārana* means to fix the mind steadily, to concentrate, on the object of meditation. *Dhyana* means to hold the mind on the object of meditation, without a break in concentration. And this then leads naturally to the state of total absorption in samadhi—either *savikalpa*, in which there is a distinction between the individual self and the Divine, or *nirvikalpa*, in which the individual self becomes merged in the one divine Reality.

Before we look at some devotional practices of Vedanta, it might be good to take a look at what Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* has to say about devotion. Is there, in fact, devotion in the yoga tradition? If not, then why practise yoga? The original practices of the yoga tradition were based on the philosophy of the Sankhya school, which does not admit a God at all. Although the yoga school, as taught by Patanjali, admits a God—referred to as '*ishvara*'—the term *ishvara* is not used exactly in the sense that the word is used in the Vedantic traditions. For instance, the *ishvara* of the yoga school is not considered the creator of the universe, as in the Vedantic idea of God. Yet, other ideas—for example, that *ishvara* is eternal and omniscient—are the same.

In Patanjali's yoga tradition, devotion to *ishvara* plays a definite part in the spiritual disciplines, so it might be good to see what this tradition has to say about it. And Swami Hariharananda Aranya, one of the great yogis of the twentieth century, has some amazing things to say about it. We shall look at just a few examples. Commenting on the term *ishvara-pranidhana*, surrender of all actions to *ishvara*, occurring in the *Yoga Sutra*, Hariharananda says:

Placing one's own mind in the tranquil mind of God is placing self in God and God in self. By thinking that all unavoidable efforts are being done by Him, as it were, one can give up all

desires for fruits of action and thus be able to completely surrender all actions to God. Such a devotee considers himself as established in God in all his actions and thus is perfectly at peace and continues his physical existence in a detached manner until his senses stop their functions. By meditating on God as Consciousness within self, a Yogin realises his individual Self.³

Again, commenting on sutra 2.45, regarding devotion to God and the attainment of samadhi, Hariharananda says:

Constant devotion to God easily leads to the attainment of Samādhi. Other Yamas and Niyamas conduce to the attainment of Samādhi by other means, but devotion to God directly leads to Samādhi, because it is a form of contemplation favourable to Samādhi. That contemplation becoming deep, makes the body motionless and restraining the organs from their objects, culminates in Dhāraṇa (fixity) and Dhyāna (meditation) and ultimately in Samādhi. Surrender of all thoughts to God means mentally merging oneself into God (2.45; 227).

To illustrate just what he means, he gives an example of a meditation on God with form, any form, in sutra 1.28. This sutra discusses the repetition of the sacred word Om and contemplation of its meaning. In his commentary, Hariharananda says that there are two methods of meditation. One is thinking of God as an outside object, and the other is thinking of God as residing within oneself. In the first—that is, thinking of God as an outside object, 'we have to think of Him as endowed with form, etc. The beginners in Yoga system adopt this method' (1.28; 66).

Regarding the second meditation—that is, thinking of God as residing within oneself—Hariharananda says: 'Buddhi [the 'pure I-sense'], I-sense, etc. are realised as parts of oneself, because we cannot ascertain or realise someone else's Buddhi, I-sense, etc. If, therefore, God has

to be thought of as part of oneself He has to be thought of as 'I am He'. This method is supported by the Śāstras' (ibid.).

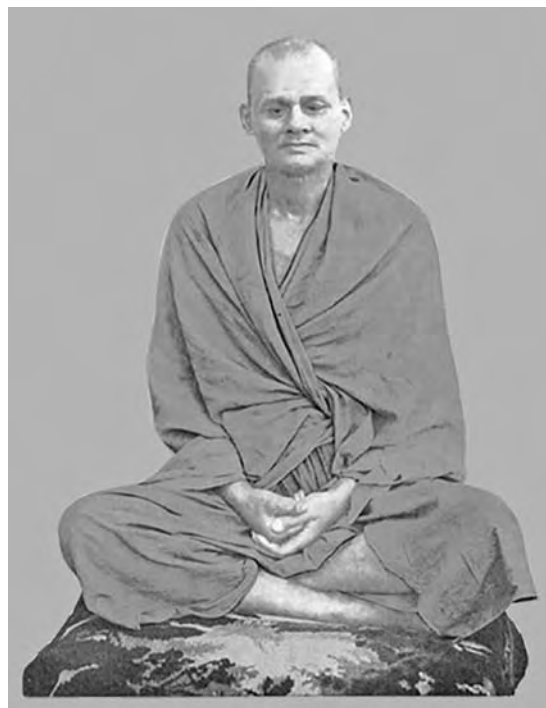
Then, returning to meditation on God with form, Hariharananda says:

Beginners who find it easier to practise Īśvara-praṇidhāna with a God having a figure should imagine a luminous figure of God inside their hearts. As a liberated person is calm in mind and is blissful in face on account of his highest attainment, so should the contemplated holy figure in one's heart be imagined to be, and it should be contemplated that one is fully associated with that figure. In repeating the mystic syllable OM, one should think oneself to be within the emblem—calm, restful and felicitous.

When after some practice the mind of the devotee becomes somewhat calm and carefree and he is able to rest in a feeling of godliness, then a transparent white limitless luminous sky should be imagined by him within his heart. Then knowing that the omnipresent God is pervading that space, the devotee should contemplate that his I-sense, *i.e.*, his whole self, is in the God who is present in his heart. The next step would be to merge his mind in the mind of the Īśvara residing in the void-like space within his heart and rest in a state of contentment, without any care or thought. ... In other words, one should contemplate that one is completely within the God in one's heart.

When the above process of meditation is mastered the devotee has a sort of blissful feeling in his heart. Then he should recollect that the blissful feeling, arising out of a sense of staying in God, is 'I' and he should bring his mind to a state of calmness and blissfulness after the mind of God. If this is practised with ardent devotion, carefully and continuously. The ultimate result of Īśvara-praṇidhāna, *viz.* realisation of one's own Self, is achieved (1.28; 66–7).

In the next sutra, Hariharananda explains the result of both practices: 'On realisation of the



Swami Hariharananda Aranya (1869–1947)

pure "I", the Yogin [in the formless meditation] gets a feeling as if he is in everything and everything is in him, or [in the meditation on God with form] that he [the yogin] is a manifestation of the Saguna Brahman' (1.29; 70). According to Hariharananda, this is the true meaning of *ishvara-pranidhana*. And, as we can see, both meditations result in a type of 'union' with God or *saguna* Brahman.

Returning to our first point about yoga as union with God, we shall look at three systems of Vedanta and see how they handle devotion to a personal God, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. What do these philosophies have to say about union with God? We shall also note how yogic practices are used to acquire this union.

We shall start with Dvaita Vedanta as expounded by Madhvacharya. Like Acharya Shankara, Madhvacharya believed that Brahman is the ultimate Reality and that the world



Madhvacharya (1238–1317)

is transitory; but unlike Acharya Shankara, Madhvacharya believed that the individual souls are real and eternal. As the word indicates, *dvaita* means dualism. Madhvacharya also calls it *bheda*, difference, indicating the difference between the independent Reality, or God, and the dependent Reality—that is, the jivas, the individual souls, also nature and the rest of the created universe. So how could Madhvacharya believe in *sayujya*, union? As this word has a basis in the scriptures, including the Upanishads, it cannot be ignored.

Although Madhvacharya follows the Bhagavata in many regards, he differs with it about the states of liberation. He recognises four levels of liberation, rather than the Bhagavata's five: *salokya*, living in the Lord's sphere; *samipya*, living close to the Lord; *sarupya*, having a form similar to the Lord's; and *sayujya*, being united with the Lord. The Bhagavata objects to a devotee desiring these states, but this is not the case with Madhvacharya. For him, these are the states to

be attained and they can only be attained after the fall of the physical body. According to him, each of these states includes the qualities of the previous one. So that means *sayujya* includes the qualities of *salokya*, *samipya*, and *sarupya*. Thus, there cannot be total union with the Lord in *sayujya*, as the devotee is also experiencing *salokya*, *samipya*, and *sarupya*.

To further understand what Madhvacharya means by *sayujya*, we should look at how this word is used in the *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chhandogya Upanishads*. What is the exact context there?

While discussing the Saman as prana, the vital force, and speech, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says, according to Acharya Shankara: '*Ashnute samna sayujyam salokatam ya evam-etat-sama veda*; he who knows this Saman, vital force, to be such attains union with it, *or* lives in the same world as it.'

As we said, this translation is based on Acharya Shankara's commentary. The problem here is: Where does Acharya Shankara get the 'or', *va*? It is not in the Sanskrit original. So according to Madhvacharya, the text means *sayujya* and *salokya*. *Sayujya*, union, is just a higher level of *salokya*, living in the same region; and *salokya* is included in *sayujya*. *Sayujya* does not negate *salokya*, as it does in Acharya Shankara's translation.

The same argument applies to the other Upanishad's reference to *sayujya*, that is, to *Chhandogya Upanishad*. Again, Acharya Shankara supplies an 'or' that is not in the text, while Madhvacharya's interpretation supplies an 'and'. Acharya Shankara's translation is: '*Sa ya evam-etad-rajanaam devatasu protam vedai-tasam-eva devatanam salokatam sarshritam sayujyam gachchhati*; he who thus knows this king, Sama, as fully established on the gods, attains the spheres of these very gods, their splendour, *or* identity with them.'

In Madhvacharya's argument against Acharya Shankara, he also claims that if the soul is always

identical with Brahman, how can the scriptures speak of the soul uniting with the Lord? When something unites with something else, the two entities go from separation to union. Thus, *sayujya* presupposes duality. According to one interpretation of Madhvacharya's philosophy, in *sayujya* the Lord and the devotee enter in an embrace, but they do not become one, and even in this state the devotee can never experience the full bliss of the Lord.

Now, are there any prescribed spiritual practices that take the aspirant to this state of liberation? According to Madhvacharya, even the perfected souls are on different levels and they attain one of the states of moksha—*salokya*, *samipya*, *sarupya*, or *sayujya*—according to their level of advancement. But the highest realisation—the highest bhakti that takes one to *sayujya*—is attained through *aparoksha-jnana*, that is, through the 'immediate, direct and perceptual or intuitive apprehension of God. ... This cannot be mere meditative imagination. ... Only the love engendered by the direct communion with the object of love can have the appropriate height and intensity. Hence, *aparoksha-jnana* is a necessity.'⁶

Aparoksha-jnana, in turn, is attained through *upasana* or *nididhyasana*, meditation. This and the grace of the Lord, according to Madhvacharya scholars, are the only ways to eliminate karma which obstructs the attainment of the Lord. Again, *nididhyasana* is practised along with karma yoga, which, according to Madhvacharya, means 'the renunciation of the self-centred motivation in action' (35). Thus, in the sadhana of the Madhvacharya tradition, the states of yogic meditation leading to *samprajnata* samadhi, samadhi on the object of meditation, are utilised.

What does Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, qualified non-dualism, have to say about union with the Divine? Ramanujacharya, the principal expounder of Vishishtadvaita, based his philosophy on the

writings of the Alvars—twelve early Vaishnava saints of Tamil Nadu—and particularly on the writings of Nammalvar, who had a great deal to say about the union and separation with the Lord.

Like Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya believed that Brahman is the ultimate Reality, that the world is transitory, and that the individual souls are real. And according to both Madhvacharya and Ramanujacharya, the body and mind dissolve in the state of moksha; yet the pure individual Self, the Atman, which attains moksha, remains. It is atomic and is the knower of itself and of God.

Following the scriptures, Ramanujacharya agrees, in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, that the individual self is 'inseparable from the supreme Brahman' and 'he experiences Brahman thus: "I am Brahman".'⁷ Further, 'after he [the individual self] gives up the body, he attains that purity which is equal to that of Brahman. ... [that is] the individual self, experiences Brahman, of which he is the mode, and also the attributes of Brahman' (482–3).

However, there are a few points to consider here: First, according to Ramanujacharya, Brahman is inseparable from its qualities, so there is no union with an absolute ultimate Reality without qualities and attributes, as with the Brahman of Advaita Vedanta. Second, in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, Ramanujacharya stresses that the

released self experiences supreme Brahman, who is free from all change, who is opposed to all evil and is the only abode of all auspicious attributes, who is bliss absolute etc.; even the worlds which are subject to change—because they are included in his manifestations [that is, they are part of the supreme Brahman]—are the objects of enjoyments of a released self; for, the scripture declares that the released self abides as an enjoyer of the supreme Brahman (4.4.19; 493).

So, Ramanujacharya's idea of becoming one with Brahman is that the individual pure self, not the ego self, becomes an enjoyer of, and participant in, Brahman's own manifestation of his glory in his supreme realm, *vaikuntha*. 'The released soul is conscious of itself as separate but yet united with the highest Brahman.'⁸

Here we can return to Hariharananda's commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*: 'In other words, one should contemplate that one is completely within the God in one's heart.'⁹ That is to say, the Lord is within us, in our heart, but we are, at the same time, within him. Similarly, in Ramanujacharya's philosophy we find two different imageries used: The Lord is hidden within the universe—like life in the body—and again the Lord is this universe. Thus the Lord is both the container and what is contained. So whether or not Ramanujacharya actually uses the word *sa-yujya* in his philosophical treatises, this would be the meaning that he would give to it.

In Ramanujacharya's philosophy, this is our state all the time, but we are not aware of this union with the Lord while we are associated with our body-mind complex. Therefore, the souls in the embodied state, who yearn for the Lord feel the pang of separation from the Lord. But in the state of liberation, after the fall of the body, they feel the bliss of union with the Lord through their service, *kainkaryā*, to the Lord. We find all these points beautifully brought out in the poems of Nammalvar.

In his poems, Nammalvar is continuously looking at God in terms of his relationship with God, and also in terms of his union and separation from God, while living as an embodied soul. We might ask, how could he feel separation from God if he knows he is a part of God—if he knows that God is within and without? The answer is: It is just this very knowing, and at the same time not fully comprehending this experience, that brings an intense feeling of separation. If we knew that

Ramanujacharya (1017–1137)



IMAGE: [HTTP://VATHIRAJAMUTT.ORG/](http://vathirajamutt.org/)

we were forever and intrinsically separate from something, we could never feel a relationship with it. We could never feel an intense desire to be united with it. We would know that it has nothing to do with us. But the very fact that Nammalvar knows without a doubt that he is eternally and intrinsically united with God creates a painful feeling of separation when the immediate realisation of that union is not experienced.

So how does the soul attain the state of liberation, where she or he dwells with the Lord and is united with the Lord through service? Besides a strong emphasis on repeating the name of the Lord, which is included in *niyama*, the second of the eight steps of yoga, the Alvar tradition has a long history of a yoga tradition. The first three Alvars are known as Sarayogi or Poigai, Bhutayogi or Bhoothath, and Bhrantayogi or Pei. It is said that the fourth Alvar, Bhaktisara or Thirumazhisai, 'used to practise *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and was learned in all the branches of Indian philosophy'.¹⁰

Nathamuni was the first of the acharyas of this tradition, which was later formally systematised by Ramanujacharya, and Nathamuni was also 'described as a great yogin who practised the *yoga* of eight accessories (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*)' (ibid.). According to N Jagadeesan, Nathamuni 'derived the secrets of yoga in a supernatural way from Nammālvār'.¹¹ Nathamuni is then said to have written a treatise on yoga, called *Yoga Rahasya*, but this was thought to have been lost. However, this text has been revived by T Krishnamacharya, a direct descendant of Nathamuni. Originally in Sanskrit, the text was translated into English by T K V Desikachar, and was published in 1998 under the title *Nathamuni's Yoga Rahasya*.¹²

After Ramanujacharya, the acharyas of the Srivaishnava tradition, especially in the Tenkalai school of Srivaishnavism, seemed to emphasise self-surrender, *prapatti*, over the practice of bhakti yoga—so much so that one would think that the

practice of yoga has long been dead in Srivaishnavism. But here we should note two points: First, self-surrender, *ishvara-pranidhana*, is itself one of the practices of ashtanga yoga. And, as Hariharananda points out in his commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*, the practice of *ishvara-pranidhana* alone can lead the aspirant directly to the goal.¹³ The second point is that, in spite of the stress put on self-surrender, the author has found that the practice of yoga, including japa and meditation, is still very much alive in modern-day Srivaishnavism, and that includes the Tenkalai school.

We can conclude this section with some excerpts regarding meditation from Ramanujacharya's commentary on the opening sutra of the *Brahma Sutra*:

Meditation, again, is a constant remembrance of the object meditated upon, like a continuous stream of oil [poured from one vessel to another]. Texts like 'When constant remembrance has been attained, all knots (bondages) are rent asunder' [*Chhandogya Upanishad* 7.26.2] ... prescribe this constant remembrance as a means to liberation. This form of remembering is as good as *seeing*. ... Remembrance when exalted assumes the same form as seeing or direct perception. ... Therefore, we conclude that he to whom this constant remembrance which is exalted to the height of direct perception is dear, because the object of that remembrance is dear, he is loved by the Self and by him the Self is realized.¹⁴

Here we should note that Ramanujacharya's 'constant remembrance' is actually the state of samadhi, the last stage of yoga.

Now, what about Advaitins? Acharya Shankara, the main exponent of Advaita Vedanta, is not exactly a philosopher whom one would associate with the path of devotion—in spite of the beautiful hymns he wrote on Vishnu, Shiva, and the Divine Mother. According to him, the individual self, the *jivatma*, is never separate from the

supreme Self, the *paramatma*. They are always one and nondual. It is only ignorance, *ajnana*, that causes the *jivatma* to think it is separate. So, there is no question that there is any state other than *sayujya*.

Moreover, Advaita Vedanta says that the whole is contained in *every* part. The real self in all of us, each one of us, is the *whole* of Brahman—Brahman, the impersonal Absolute, that is, and not *ishvara*, the personal God. But for Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya this is blasphemy, because for them Brahman is *saguna*, with all the auspicious qualities, and is also *ishvara*, and no one can be equal to *ishvara*.

Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya, and Acharya Shankara—all agree that this universe has no existence apart from Brahman, the absolute Reality. But according to Acharya Shankara, this universe is superimposed on Brahman. The universe is ever-changing and is therefore illusory, while Brahman is *nirguna*, without qualities. Ramanujacharya, on the other hand, says that this universe is the body of God, who is

Brahman with qualities, *saguna*, and that the universe is real and not illusory.

So it would seem that there is not much scope for devotion to a personal God in the philosophy of Acharya Shankara. Though in his *Vivekachudamani*, Acharya Shankara encourages devotion as a means to attain Self-knowledge, what is his definition here of devotion? He says: ‘The seeking after one’s real nature is designated as devotion.’¹⁵ This will never mollify a dyed-in-the-wool bhakta to whom service to the Lord is the only goal to be attained.

Yet, like a stream running underground, devotion can never remain hidden for long. We shall look at two Advaitins—Ramana Maharshi and Madhusudana Sarasvati—and see what they have to say about devotion and devotional practices.

Ramana Maharshi did not speak much about devotion, but in the following instruction to a devotee, he zeroed in on the real meaning of devotion and how it unites the devotee with the Lord.

Someone once asked him, ‘What is the end of devotion (bhakti) and the path of *Siddhānta* (i.e., *Śaiva Siddhānta*)?’ Ramana Maharshi replied: ‘It is to learn the truth that all one’s actions performed with unselfish devotion, with the aid of the three purified instruments (body, speech and mind), in the capacity of the servant of the Lord, become the Lord’s actions, and to stand forth free from the sense of “I” and “mine”’. This is also the truth of what the *Śaiva Siddhāntins* call *parā-bhakti* (supreme devotion) or living in the service of God (*irai-pani-nitral*).¹⁶ I don’t believe Ramanujacharya would object to this answer. Moreover, this mirrors Hariharananda’s commentary on sutra 2.32 of the *Yoga Sutra*, on *ishvara-pranidhana*.

This same idea was further elaborated by Ramana Maharshi in a powerful teaching on japa, the repetition of the name of the Lord, given by him to Swami Damodarananda, who was a monk

Nammalvar



of the Ramakrishna Order, during his pre-monastic days. In his reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi, Damodarananda wrote that he had asked the Maharshi to tell him the easiest path to *atma-darshanam*, realisation of the Self. The Maharshi

said that of all the methods of dedicating oneself to *Paramatman* (the Supreme Being), the easiest and the best method is the repetition of the mantra of one's own chosen deity. *Japa* promotes a constant flow of loving prayer from within for inner illumination. This wakes up a subtle thirst that steadily increases, leading to a strong current of continuous yearning for the Divine, known as *vyakulata*. When this yearning develops into deep absorption (*dhyana*), Divinity reveals itself from within. This is *Atma-darshanam*. ...

In brief, Sri Ramana explained that the aspirant first repeats the mantra out loud with all possible diligence and devotion. Then, as his or her loving attitude intensifies, the repetition gradually becomes internalized. As the body, senses and mind get purified and become free from their selfish nature, the whole being gets tuned to the Divine. The power of the mantra enters into every nook and cranny of the individual. The aspirant becomes *mantramaya* (filled with the spiritual power of the mantra), in and through all activities. One's life gets transformed into a continuous offering to the Lord, without any attachment remaining to the results of one's actions. ... As one dives deep within, the mind dissolves into the Self, and all distinctions between *bhakta* (devotee), *Bhagavan* (the Lord) and *Bhagavata* (sacred text) vanish in divine illumination.¹⁷

And that is the devotee's *sayujya*, according to Ramana Maharshi. Though the Bhagavata disapproves of this type of mukti, this is most likely what the Bhagavata's *sayujya* means.

It was Madhusudana Sarasvati (fl. 1600 CE) who successfully refuted all the criticisms of Advaita Vedanta that had been levelled by Vyasa-tirtha, a follower of Madhvacharya.

Vyasa-tirtha had basically brought the school of Advaita Vedanta to its knees through his work *Nyayamrita*, which attacked point by point all the arguments of the classic texts of Advaita. But in his illustrious work *Advaita-siddhi*, Madhusudana Sarasvati, in turn, successfully refuted all of Vyasa-tirtha's points and restored Advaita to its glory. Yet, Madhusudana Sarasvati was not a typical Advaitin. According to Sanjukta Gupta, a scholar of Madhusudana Sarasvati: 'The works of Madhusudana reveal him to be a versatile genius, a faithful commentator, an independent writer on Śaṅkara's school of monism as well as an upholder of the concept of *bhakti*. ... His unique contribution to Indian philosophy is his attempt to visualise a union between absolute monism and devotionalism.'¹⁸

Madhusudana Sarasvati himself wrote several works on devotion, including *Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasayana* and a commentary on the first verse of the Srimad Bhagavata. Moreover, his commentary on the Bhagavadgita called the *Gudhārtha Dipika* is filled with devotional fervour throughout, in spite of the fact that he rarely strayed from Acharya Shankara's views. But, unlike Acharya Shankara, Madhusudana Sarasvati placed much emphasis in his commentary on God's grace. And in his commentary on verse 18.66 of the Gita, he 'unambiguously declared that the core message of all the scriptures including the *Gītā* is self-surrender to God, this being the culmination of all spiritual practices.'¹⁹

So where does he stand on *sayujya*, union? In his *Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasayana*, Madhusudana describes eleven stages of bhakti, the final one being '*premnāḥ parā kāṣṭhā*, or the climax of divine love.'²⁰ This is 'characterised by extreme intolerance of separation, and resulting finally in the surrender of life' (133). 'Madhusudana does not expressly say in this context whether at the time of realisation of this stage the devotee

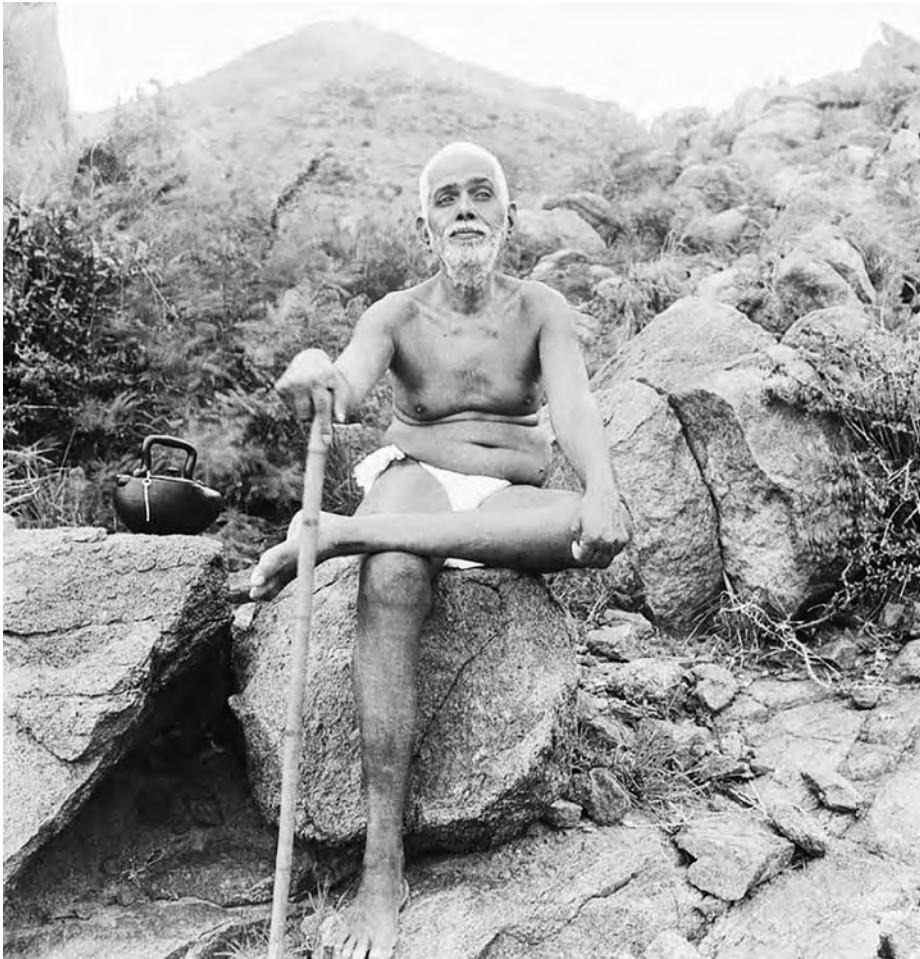
becomes completely identified with Bhagavat, or whether some distinction still remains between the two, as is generally believed in different Vaiṣṇava schools. Madhusūdana leaves it to his readers to guess the truth' (134). However, according to Madhusudana Sarasvati, even before this stage 'some process of identification between the devotee and reality is necessary. In other words, he takes this process of identification to be an inevitable prerequisite in the development of *bhakti*. It can therefore be presumed that the realisation of *prema* inextricably involves the experience of identification as well' (ibid.).

For Madhusudana Sarasvati, Advaita is very much the supreme Truth and the ultimate Reality. But is it his goal? From the following statements written by him in his Gita

commentary, it seems it is not: 'There are some able persons who, by fixing their own minds on an Infinite, certainly bring about the cessation of (hankering for) other objects. (But) my mind, O Slayer of Madhu (Madhusūdana), gets exhilarated again and again by tasting a drop of honey dripping from Your lotus-feet!'²¹ 'I do not know of any Reality higher than that of Kṛṣṇa whose hands are adorned with a flute, whose colour is that of a new rain-cloud, who wears a yellow cloth, whose lips are like a red bimba fruit, whose face is beautiful like the full moon, and whose eyes are like lotuses' (18.78; 1000).

Regarding the practice of yoga, Madhusudana Sarasvati has included important sections of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* in his commentary on the sixth chapter of the Gita, the chapter on

Ramana Maharshi



meditation. That alone shows Madhusudana Sarasvati's endorsement of the complete practice of yoga in the path of devotion, as well as in the path of knowledge, jnana yoga.

We should note here again that there is one thing all the devotional schools of Vedanta agree on, and that is, when devotees attain the state of devotional mukti, in whatever aspect, *salokya*, and the like, and commune with the Lord, they are completely transformed. They no longer retain any association with the psycho-physical system through which they practised sadhana. For instance, the devotee 'Joe Smith' who practised sadhana in Dallas, Texas, in his physical form no longer exists. He has dissolved. His ego and everything associated with it has melted away. It is the pure Atman, the individual Self, that remains to serve the Lord.

'Melted' is a term used consistently by Madhvacharya, by Nammalvar, and also by Madhusudana Sarasvati. According to Madhusudana Sarasvati's *Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasayana*: '*Brahmavidyā* (i.e. *akhaṇḍākāra-citta-vṛtti*) is an undifferentiated mental mode (*nirvikalpa-manaso-vṛtti*), comprehending the non-dual reality (*Brahman*). *Bhakti*, on the other hand, is a differentiated *savikalpa* mode of a melted mind, having *Bhagavat* as its content.'²²

Further, we should remember that Sri Ramakrishna also described this transformed, melted, consciousness of the devotee. He referred to it as the 'love body'. As he said: 'But devotees acquire a "love-body", and with its help they see the Spirit-form of the Absolute.'²³ And in another place, he says: 'God cannot be seen with these physical eyes. In the course of spiritual discipline one gets a "love body", endowed with "love eyes", "love ears", and so on. One sees God with those "love eyes". One hears the voice of God with those "love ears". ... With this "love body" the soul communes with God' (115).

As we have seen, Sri Chaitanya and the Bhagavata agree with the traditional Advaitins that *sayujya* means total absorption in the supreme Self, and this is why Sri Chaitanya and the Bhagavata condemn it, but this is not necessarily the case with the other bhakti schools of Vedanta, or with Madhusudana Sarasvati. Madhvacharya, who accepted the state of *sayujya*, certainly did not hold this view, nor did Ramanuja. Nammalvar over and again spoke of union—but not in the sense of total absorption in the Absolute. So we have to admit that the word *sayujya*, union, means different things in different schools of thought.

So how do we know which definition of *sayujya* is correct? Over many centuries so many scholarly debates took place among the Dvaitins, the Vishishtadvaitins, the Advaitins, and the followers of other philosophical schools in between, to find the 'true' goal of religion. Yet, no one could prove anything for sure. But in the nineteenth century, Sri Ramakrishna showed through his own experiences and teachings that they are all true—that they are all like pictures of the sun taken from different places.

Sri Ramakrishna's metaphor of the ocean and ice explains it very well—that the *nitya*, the Absolute, and the *lila*, the relative plane of consciousness, or God's eternal play with the devotees, are but two aspects of the same Reality.²⁴

Well, it explains almost everything. One doubt still remains: We understand through Sri Ramakrishna's illustration of the ocean and ice that the devotee can merge in the Absolute after enjoying the divine play with the personal God. But once the devotee merges in the ocean, the Absolute, can she or he return again to enjoy the divine play? Can one enjoy the bliss of union, in whatever manner, and the play with the Personal God after having merged in the Absolute?

Swami Brahmananda once said: 'Spiritual life begins after *nirvikalpa samadhi*.'²⁵ The Advaitin,

Narahari, would agree. In his work *Bodhasara*, he wrote: 'Before one attains the knowledge of Brahman, the experience of duality creates delusion. But after the attainment of this knowledge, the duality created by one's intellect for the sake of experiencing devotion, is much more delightful than non-duality.'²⁶

But do these statements refer only to spiritual states of the *jivanmukta*, the liberated soul who still remains in her or his body? Or does it also refer to a state beyond the death of the body?

Most likely, from what Sri Ramakrishna says, it seems the answer is that one *can* return to the divine play: 'From the Nitya to the Lila and from the Lila to the Nitya. ... The Lila belongs to Him to whom the Nitya belongs, and the Nitya belongs to Him to whom the Lila belongs.'²⁷ And again, 'To go up from the Lila to the Nitya and come down again from the Nitya to the Lila is mature bhakti' (599).

Yet, there is still another state that Sri Ramakrishna speaks of, a state that is beyond one and two: 'There is a state of consciousness where the many disappears, and the One, as well; for the many must exist as long as the One exists' (307). So, does a person then go beyond both the *nitya* and the *lila*? Traditional Advaitins would say yes. But an Advaitin like Madhusudana Sarasvati? Most likely not. Though he never expressly admits what the goal of the devotee is, or what *his* goal is—whether the devotee enjoys a relationship with the Lord in a divine realm, or she or he becomes identified with the personal God—he definitely gives primacy to the bliss of divine Love for the personal aspect of God. Sanjukta Gupta says:

Following the ... [Bhagavata Purana], Madhusūdana puts divine love above salvation [Advaita mukti], where divine love at its climax places the devotee in a state of perpetual ecstatic bliss. The devotee enjoys at that stage the

ecstasy of supreme love for Bhagavat. ... such an ecstatic experience is regarded, by the followers of the ... [Bhagavata Purana], as the highest goal of a person. Madhusūdana accepts this view. ... [Madhusudana] puts this experience above the experience of undifferentiated Brahman.²⁸

As we have seen, bhaktas have various choices—choices of paths, of spiritual practices, yogic disciplines, and also of goals. Do you desire one of the four or five forms of devotional mukti, *salokya*, and the like? Or do you feel they are blasphemous and would prefer to serve your chosen deity without any thought of enjoying the bliss of that service? Or do you desire to attain *sayujya*, the highest of these states? And, if so, what type of *sayujya*—that of Madhvacharya, of Ramanujacharya, of Ramana Maharshi? Or do you consider that to be even more blasphemous?

Traditional Advaitins might scoff at all this and say: 'These are all paths to *krama* mukti, gradual liberation. Just wait. You'll get to the real goal eventually, and then you will merge in the Absolute, like it or not! And that is the real *sayujya*, yoga.'

But I don't think Sri Ramakrishna would say this. After all, referring to the ocean and ice example, he said that there are places in the ocean where the ice never melts. That is, if the devotee wants, one can enjoy an eternal relationship with the Lord. And as for Madhusudana Sarasvati, the author of *Advaita Siddhi*, I somehow believe he would agree with Krishna Prem, who wrote:

If there were no Krishna I, personally, should be happy enough with Advaita Vedanta, but, and there is the rub, there *is* Krishna and if you see Him all previous values go into reverse as it were. ... If it was not for Krishna all could be plain sailing. Only a fool would fear to abandon the ridiculous for the sublime. But *there is Krishna* and there's the difficulty. Just imagine that Krishna stands before you offering you either *advaita moksha* or Himself; which in fact

would you choose? You may say the choice is not a real one, that Krishna is Himself *moksha*. Very likely, but the converse is not so true—*di-yamanam na grihnanti*.

You may argue as much as you please to avoid being confronted with the choice. Deny its existence, explain that both mean the same, demonstrate that I neither understand Krishna nor *moksha* or I should never have put the alternatives. Nevertheless, all your shouting will only serve to drown a voice in your heart which says that even the possibility of finding Krishna is better than the certainty of [advaita] *moksha*.

What more? As Goethe said: 'Choose, for your choice is brief and yet endless.'²⁹

So, what would you choose?



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24. See *Gospel*, 191: 'Satchidananda is like an infinite ocean. Intense cold freezes the water into ice, which floats on the ocean in blocks of various forms. Likewise, through the cooling influence of bhakti, one sees forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. These forms are meant for the bhaktas, the lovers of God. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts; it becomes the same water it was before. ... But you may say that for certain devotees God assumes eternal forms. There are places in the ocean where the ice doesn't melt at all. It assumes the form of quartz.'
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Understanding the Basic Concepts of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra

Swami Muktidananda

PATANJALI'S *Yoga Sutra* is a repository of precious and precise accumulated knowledge of centuries from several previous schools of yoga and different streams of spiritual practice. It enables us to discover inner spiritual pathways within our personality. This will finally lead us to the experience of spiritual consciousness naturally residing in the centre of our being.

The concept of Self as distinct from the mind and as the source of all consciousness is a unique contribution of the *Yoga Sutra*, and also that of Vedanta, to the world thought.

The goal of Indian yoga psychology is transcendence. It recognises that many existential problems of life have no earthly solutions but they can be transcended. The *Yoga Sutra* promises to free the human being from all suffering and give one everlasting fulfilment. Yoga psychology demonstrates that by the power of intense concentration and purification, the whole personality can be transformed.

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Patanjali's Yoga Sutra: A Key to Understand Our Self and the Essentials of Spiritual Practice

As we start wondering at the mystery of our own existence and aspire to know what we actually are, beyond this death-bound body-mind complex, the awakened and curious human intellect naturally gets seized with this mystery and tries to unravel it. The mind as it is, by the usual upbringing and training that we normally get in our families, societies, and the types of education today, can only make us somewhat cultured and civilised, but cannot help us to know the mysteries of our existence and solve our basic problems of life like old age, disease, and death. Yet the mind is the most powerful and mysterious instrument of God's creation, and we human beings are caped with this great tool. Moreover, the mind is the chief instrument through which we understand and also operate in the external world. Once again, it is through the same mind that we are to know the subtler and deeper aspects of ourselves and of the external world we live in.

The entire external manifestation of the powers of the mind has made the human culture and civilisation of millions of years that we see

around. And yoga is the internal manifestation of the powers of the mind, which has enabled us to search for the truth of our existence and of the world. This has given rise to religion and spirituality. The spiritual pathways ultimately lead us to the region of spiritual mind, which has higher capabilities that were hitherto in a dormant state. This activation and awakening of the higher spiritual mind is the purpose of *Yoga Sutra* through '*chitta vritti nirodhah*', the restraining of mental waves.¹

The *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali is one of the great works that can help us understand and recognise the working modes of our mind and also to control them to bring out the hidden powers of the mind. It gives us the insight into the structure and functioning of our body-mind complex. It also prescribes definite methods to control, refine, and gradually transform our uncontrollable mental waves to make them worthy to experience spiritual consciousness. Thus, the *Yoga Sutra* enables us to discover the inner pathways by creating a bridge of spiritual samskaras.

The *Yoga Sutra* is the one text that systematically guides us to explore the deeper realms of the mind. It teaches us how to discover the inner subtler and higher strata of the mind and to identify the appropriate pathways for the inner spiritual journey.

Basic Concepts of the Yoga Sutra

According to the *Yoga Sutra*, the basic principles underlying our existence and the composition of our body, mind, personality, and the world is founded on the two principles: Purusha, the self which alone is conscious, and Prakriti, the nature which is *jada*, inert and not conscious. These two are conjoined due to primary ignorance called *avidya*, which makes us identify strongly with the body-mind complex. This primary identification, which is of the nature of *sarupya*, is the

cause of bondage. It is like when a crystal and a red flower are kept next to each other; the crystal would appear red, though its true nature is colourless. This primary ignorance consists of the following *kleshas*, obstacles: *Asmita*, the ego, the phenomenon of identification with the body and the mind as 'I'. This basic 'I' sense, selfhoodness is *asmita*. Then comes, *raga*, attachment to the objects of the world. This is followed by *dvesha*, hatred or aversion. Then comes, *abhinivesha*, clinging to life.

These four are the primary obstacles and together with *avidya* are called *pancha-kleshas*, the five torments of life (2.3). They are called *kleshas* because they act as obstacles and generate suffering.

Purusha-Prakriti Samyoga and Viyoga

The primary ignorance is due to the identification of 'I' consciousness with the body-mind complex; *dehatma-buddhi*. According to the *Yoga Sutra*, this union is called Purusha-Prakriti *samyoga*, which is due to *avidya*, and leads to bondage (2.17). Their separation, called Purusha-Prakriti *viyoga*, leads to *kaivalya*, liberation.

This bondage, according to Patanjali, can be overcome by following three streams of spiritual practices: Ashtanga yoga (2.29), *kriya* yoga (2.1), and *para-vairagya* (3.50).

Ashtanga yoga • It starts with *yama*, internal discipline, and *niyama*, external discipline, which from the very beginning, relates the path of yoga to the practice of perfection in behaviour. This links spiritual practice to daily life, enabling us to take primary control over the mind by the control of our behavioural patterns.

An agile body, healthy habits, keeping the body in a *sattvic* state and high levels of energy are required to practise *pratyahara*, *dharana*, and *dhyana*. This is achieved through the practice of *asana* and *pranayama*.

It is well said that, '*Shariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam*; for the practice of dharma a healthy body is a must'.² This saying has to be properly understood by the spiritual seeker. In Ashtanga yoga, Patanjali states that it is necessary to develop the ability to sit for a considerable length of time in a comfortable posture and with the spine erect: '*Sthirasukham asanam*; the posture should be steady and comfortable'.³

The *Charaka Samhita*, a famous text of Ayurveda says in its first chapter: '*Dharma-artha-kama-mokshanam arogyam moolam-uttamam*; health is indispensable to achieve dharma, artha, kama, and moksha'.⁴

However, Sri Ramakrishna wanted us to go forward from yogasana to bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, and jnana yoga, and not to get stuck with giving too much attention to the body by resorting to all kinds of complex practices of yogasanas, which only increase body consciousness. That is why he advised his disciple Jogin, later Swami Yogananda, who was fascinated by a hatha yogi, who was staying in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar, not to undertake complex practices of hatha yoga.⁵

However, we all understand that only with the help of a healthy body can we raise our mind beyond the body and dedicate it to the attainment of higher spiritual pursuits. At the same time, a basic optimum attention to the body has to be given, because it is our indispensable tool to experience divine Consciousness.

Therefore, the body, which is an important and complex instrument with tremendous influence over the mind, has to be made healthy and fit, and it should never become an obstacle, *badhaka*, to spiritual practices.

Concentration and inwardness of the mind is achieved by the practice of *pratyahara* and *dharana*, which make the field of the mind, *chitta bhumi*, fit for meditation, dhyana, and spiritual experience, *samadhi*.

Thus, by following this ashtanga yoga, eight-fold path, we can achieve physical, pranic, vital, biochemical, and mental fitness. This further leads to freedom from different types of *viparyaya*, unconscious murmurs, and *klesha* samskaras. Next, by purification and inwardness of the mind, *chitta vritti nirodhah* is attained. The mental waves, *vrittis* are to be given a *sattvic* turn; full awareness of Purusha has to be cultivated; and finally one should keep active only one mental wave, *eka vritti*. This will result in the *vrittis* getting lighted up by the luminous light of the Purusha, which is called *prajna*. Consequently, *jnana vritti*, arises; which is termed as *viveka khyati*, knowledge of the separation of the seer, *drik*, and the seen, *drishya*.⁶ *Viveka khyati* gives us varieties of spiritual experiences, and this state is called *samprajnata* *samadhi*.

In the *samprajnata* state a single *sattvic vritti* is maintained, which reflects the light of the Purusha and gradually culminates in the state called *viveka khyati*. So, in the *samprajnata* state, *viveka khyati* dawns. In this state of *viveka khyati* the seer does not identify oneself with the *vrittis* and is free from the idea of *kartritva*, doership; instead, the *drashta*, seer, remains abiding in one's own spiritual consciousness. The fire of the spiritual illumination called *prasamkhyana agni*, in the state of *samprajnata*, finally burns all the inactive tendencies, *tanu* samskaras, into *dagdha bija*, burnt seed, which cannot sprout. Thus, the ingredients of Prakriti go back to their source by a process called *pratiprasava*. This state in which the samskaras have been totally burnt is called *asamprajnata* *samadhi*, which ultimately leads to *kaivalya*.

Kriya yoga • It is mentioned in the beginning of the *sadhana-pada*, the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*. It is an abridged course of *sadhana*, which emphasises *tapas*, *svadhyaya*, and *ishvara prani-dhana* (2.1) as the main three *sadhanas* to be practised. These *sadhanas* lead to *klesha nivritti*, and

consequently to the experience of *viveka khyati* and *kaivalya*. There is no prerequisite to practise *kriya* yoga, unlike *ashtanga* yoga, wherein one has to first practise *yama* and *niyama* before seriously taking up the next level of *sadhana*. *Kriya* yoga is meant for all aspirants and the main emphasis here is to attain freedom from *kleshas*, which qualifies one to experience *viveka khyati*.

Para-vairagya • It is also an independent path meant for *uttama adbhikaris*, evolved aspirants, born with spiritual *samskaras*. By intense detachment, *vashikara vairagya*, from the enjoyments of the three worlds as well as from one's lower self, the aspirant abides in a higher state of consciousness (1.15–6).

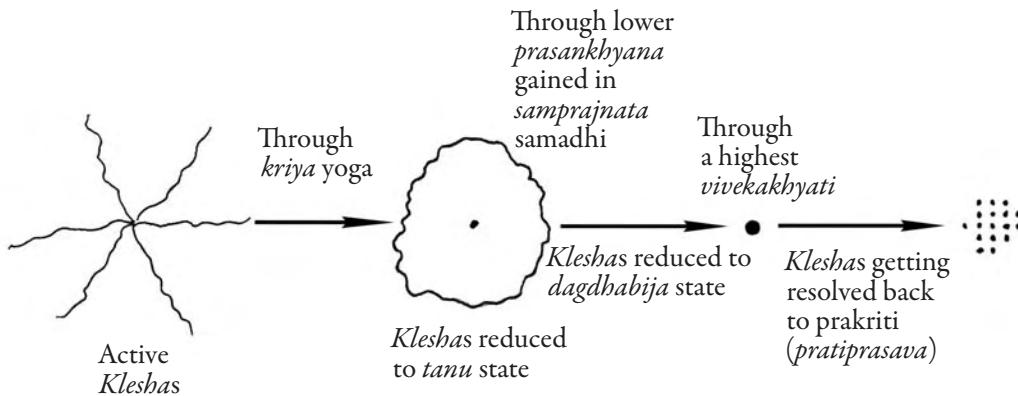
How Does Avidya Manifest?

Avidya is the breeding ground of the rest of the four *kleshas*, which exists in four states: dormant, *prasupta*; attenuated, *tanu*; repressed or suppressed, *vichchhinna*; and freely expressed, *udara* (2.4).

How does this *avidya* manifest? The *Yoga Sutra* says: '*Anitya ashuchi dukkha anatmasu nitya shuchi sukha atma khyatih avidya*; Ignorance is taking the non-eternal for the eternal, the impure for the pure, evil for good, and non-self

as self' (2.5). *Avidya* manifests as erroneous perception, which leads to wrong knowledge, that is unreal, *anitya*, appears to be real, *nitya*; impure, *ashuchi*, appears to be pure, *shuchi*; misery, *dukkha*, appears to be happiness, *sukha*; and 'not-self', *anatman*, appears to be 'Self', *Atman*.

This wrong knowledge is the cause of bondage. The *pancha-kleshas* and *vrittis* that arise out of it can be gradually removed only by meditation: '*Dhyana heyah tad vrittayah*; their active afflictions are to be destroyed by meditation' (2.11). According to the *Yoga Sutra*, the experience of consciousness, of *Purusha*, by ascending to the state of *samadhi* through *chitta vritti nirodhab*, total elimination of the thought process, is called *samyama*. Different types of practices to control the dynamism of mind by the control of *chitta vritti* is called *samyama*, dealt with in the *vibhuti* pada (3.1–54), and subsequently by repeatedly keeping the mind in a state of *samadhi*: '*Samadhi bhavana-arthat klesha tanu karana-arthat shcha*; this discipline is practised for the purpose of acquiring fixity of mind on the Lord, free from all impurities and agitations, or on one's own Reality, and for attenuating the afflictions' (2.2).



Kriya yoga

Understanding Chitta Vritti Nirodhah

Let us first understand the meaning of *chitta*, *vritti*, and *nirodhah*, important concepts of the *Yoga Sutra*.

Chitta • It simply means the mind-stuff. The receptacle of all the *samskaras* and the field in which a *vritti*, thought wave, rises is called *chitta*. Three important characteristic features of *chitta* are: it constantly keeps changing, it is of the nature of the three *gunas*, and one of the *gunas* always dominates over the other two. Accordingly, the nature of mind changes, and the mode of the operation of the mind also changes.

Vritti • It means a wave, *taranga*, a ripple in the mind by which we perceive the world. This perception of the objects of the world through the mind-waves is called *vritti-jnana*. This knowledge gained through *vritti* is called *khyati*. Panchashika, the famous commentator of the *Yoga Sutra*, starts his commentary with the statement, '*Ekameva darshanam khyatireva darshanam*', which means that we perceive the world through the knowledge, *khyati*, got through the rise of *chitta vritti*. This is the great discovery of the *Yoga Sutra* that gives us the structural and functional basis of knowledge gained through the mind.

Vritti is not like one of the many waves in a lake; here the whole mind becomes *chitta vritti*. Therefore, at one moment there can be only one *vritti* and one thought.

Vrittis can be produced by outside stimulus

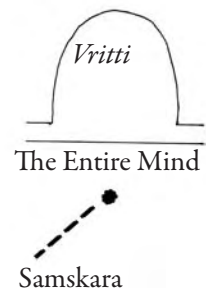
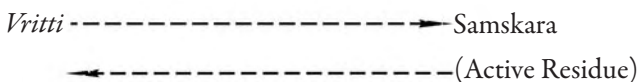
received from objects, *vishaya*. *Vrittis* can also be produced within the mind itself from the surfacing of the accumulated *samskaras*. A seed-impression of the experience in the subconscious is called *samskara*, which gives rise to *vrittis*, and in turn *vrittis* produce *samskaras*.

Thus *chitta vritti* and *vritti jnana* are the fundamental concepts of the *Yoga Sutra*. All the sutras are ultimately based on this understanding of *chitta vritti*.

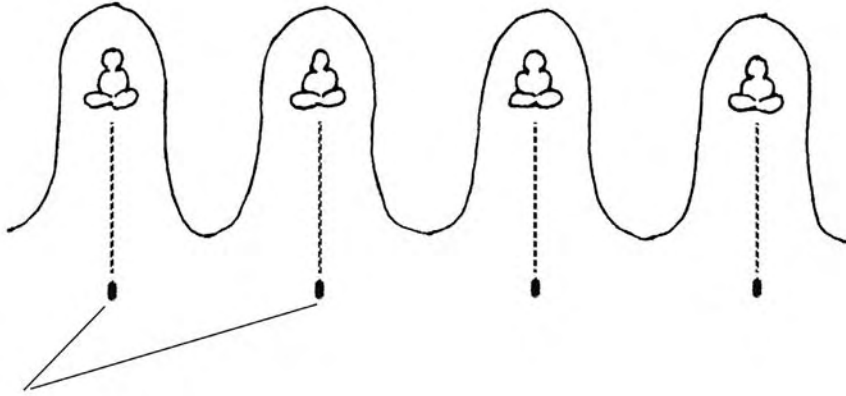
How is Vritti Produced? What is Samskara?

From the external objects of the world come the stimulus that strike the field of the mind, and then immediately a *vritti* rises. This rising of the *vritti* is induced by *rajas* *guna*, one of the three aspects of *Prakriti*. Once the *vritti* rises in response to the stimulus from the world, knowledge manifests in the mind after some time due to *sattva* *guna*. Then, owing to *tamas* *guna*, the *vritti* descends and reaches a state of *sthiti*, stillness. In *sthiti* the *vritti* is said to be in a state of *nirodha* very briefly, which happens naturally. Then the particular *vritti* disappears and gets converted into a seed-impression called *samskara*. Thus *vritti* and *samskara* occur in the mind alternatively.

Vritti has three aspects; one is active aspect with *rajas*, which is responsible for the rise of *vritti*. According to the *Yoga Sutra*, with the help of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the whole mind



Samskara and Vritti



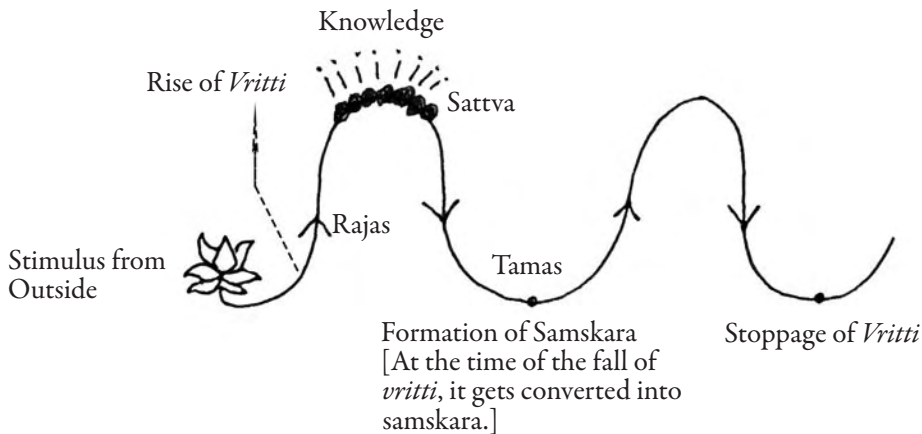
Samskara Producing Vritti

changes into one *vritti*. Sattva is responsible for the knowledge aspect of *vritti*, wherein the light of the Purusha gets reflected, thus giving rise to the experience of knowledge. So, knowledge is possible only when the *sattvic* aspect of the risen *vritti* and the light of the Purusha gets reflected there. *Tamas* is responsible for the fall or termination of *vrittis* leading to a state of a very short stillness called *nirodha* or *sthiti*. So there is a natural stoppage of *vrittis* between two *chitta vrittis*. If the *vrittis* are stopped, *kaivalya* is attained, because Prakriti has no function

to perform and that leads to the separation of Purusha and Prakriti.

It can be seen that samskaras are mostly in a dormant state of mind. Only when a particular samskara gets activated that it gives rise to *vritti*, which in turn manifests knowledge. Every experience of the world leaves behind an active residue called samskara, which is capable of reproducing an original *vritti*. This is an important contribution of the Yoga Sutra.

There are two types of *samskara*: *vasana* and *karma bija*. *Vasana* produces a *vritti* called



Production of Samskara

memory. The reappearance of memory produced by activated samskaras in the form of *chitta vritti* is called *vasana*.

Karma *bija* produces a *chitta vritti* called impulse. It is like the scar of a wound, a furrow of experience, a mark made by the experience. That which produces an impulse or the effect of karma or karma *phala*, is karma *bija*.

Bad thoughts usually come in the form of memory, which need not frighten us. If the *vritti* is only in the form of mere memory, it will go away. But if it gains ground by repeated occurrences in the field of the mind and provokes the mind, an impulse gets roused propelling the organs of action, *karmendriyas*, to act. In such a situation, we can hold it down by the power of the will or by recalling constructive and opposing memories: ‘*Vitarka badhane pratipaksha bhavana*; when improper thoughts disturb the mind, there should be constant pondering over the opposites’ (2.33).

Samskaras can be classified into *klesha* samskaras and *prajna* samskaras. *Klesha* samskaras give rise to different types of *kleshas*. *Prajna* samskara is the samskara of spiritual experiences. When the mind is purified and becomes free from *kleshas*, the light of Purusha begins to illumine the *vrittis*. This kind of luminous *vrittis* are called *prajna vrittis*, which give rise to varieties of spiritual experiences. This spiritually luminous and conscious state of mind is called *samprajnata*. Spiritual experiences in this state give rise to a fire called *prasankhyana*, which will burn *klesha* samskaras. *Prajna* samskaras manifesting during the process of *dhyana*, gradually remove *klesha* samskaras and protect us from them.

Classification of Vrittis


Vrittis are considered *klishta*, causing pain, and *aklishta*, giving rise to painless perceptions. Tormenting *vrittis* causing bondage and ignorance are called *klishta*; those that do not torment and

give only knowledge are called *aklishta*. These *vrittis* are classified into five categories: *pramana*, true knowledge; *viparyaya*, wrong or unreal knowledge pertaining to unreal things; *vikalpa*, unreal concepts about any subject consisting only of words; *nidra*, the state in which there is a lack of awareness of the world and in which the mind gets covered by *tamas* guna; and *smriti*, the storing and recollecting of information about particular objects in the subconscious mind.

Conclusion

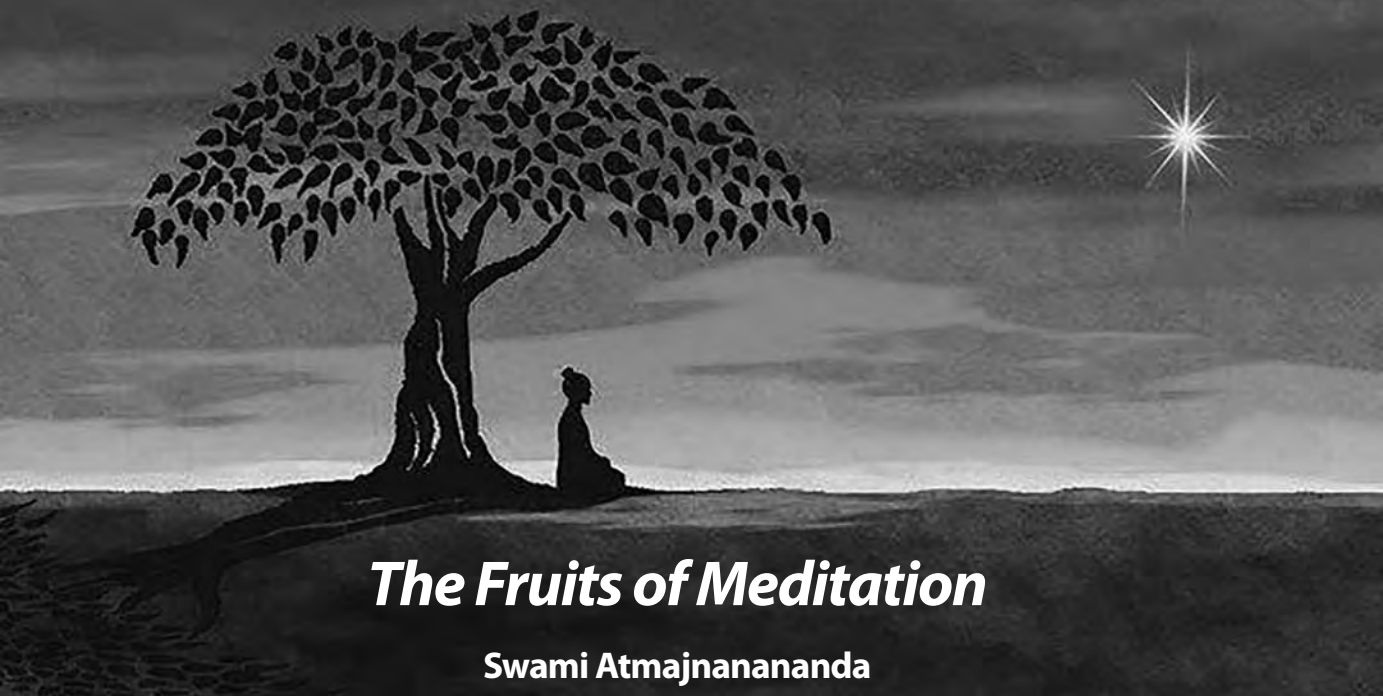
Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra* is a text that helps us to know the internal subtle workings of the mind and provides us with the accumulated knowledge of the practical methods to control and harness the powers of the mind.

The truths explained in the *Yoga Sutra* has been amply verified by practitioners of ancient and modern times, and its deep psychological and scientific methods have proved to be of unique help to not only solve the problems of daily life, but to attain the higher realms of transcendence as well.

In this paper an attempt has been made to very briefly describe the important basic concepts of an ancient and widely acknowledged scripture of humankind in a *sutra* form. It is beyond the scope of this paper to unfold all the knowledge hidden in this text. Therefore, what has been presented here is just the tip of an iceberg. If it has created in the reader an interest to know more about this practical manual of spiritual practices, the purpose of this write-up would be fulfilled. 

References

1. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2.
2. Kalidasa, *Kumarasambhavam*, 5.33.
3. *Yoga Sutra*, 2.46.
4. *Charaka Samhita*, 1.1.15.
5. See Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived with Them* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 222–3.
6. *Yoga Sutra*, 2.2, 2.16–19, 2.27–8.



The Fruits of Meditation

Swami Atmajnanananda

ONE OF THE PLAYFUL LITTLE TRICKS of Swami Brahmananda was to go around to the monks while they were seated for meditation and japa and quietly place some sweets or fruits before them without their knowledge. Later he would ask them if they had obtained the fruits of their meditation.¹ It seems like a simple, childlike practical joke played by a great soul on his disciples, and indeed it was the cause of great merriment and laughter, but it was not without special significance and a deeper meaning. On the one hand, he seemed to be saying that we expect the fruits of our spiritual practices to be tangible and concrete, that the experience of the state of liberation will be like holding a fruit in the palm of one's hands, *kara-tala-phala*-mukti. He also seemed to be saying: 'Don't expect to get the real results of spiritual practice as easily as this. It's a long, hard

struggle.' And perhaps he was also trying to tell us that while the fruits of sincere spiritual practice are indeed tangible and undeniable, our own conception of what those fruits will be like may be as childlike as a desire for sweets. That is to say, we have a certain conception of what the fruits of meditation are, but unless and until we have some higher realisation, we will not really know. And even then, we may not know them in the same way that great souls such as Brahmananda, who directly experienced these things, knew them.

The scriptures and the words of God-realised souls tell us much about the fruits of meditation. We read in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* and other texts about all sorts of wonderful results. Aside from miraculous powers, we also find references to good health, clear complexion, a sweet fragrance coming from the body, and so on. Swami Vivekananda speaks about meditation restoring and replenishing the body: 'When you come out of it [meditation] after the hour, you have

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had the most beautiful rest you ever had in your life. That is the only way you ever give rest to your system. Not even the deepest sleep will give you such rest as that.² And for him it was really so, for he could enter into deep states of meditation at will, remain in them for hours on end, and rarely slept more than a few hours at night.

Most of us have no interest in the secondary fruits of meditation. We have read too much of Sri Ramakrishna and his disdain for *siddhis* or occult powers. And we know very well that Swamiji hated anything mysterious or supernatural. So we understand that some of these so-called 'fruits' of meditation are not only to be dismissed but actively shunned, for they may represent obstacles in spiritual life and sidetrack us from the real goal. Many of us may be a little skeptical about the possibility of such occult powers as levitation or think that such cases are so rare as to not be of any consequence. Further, we have our high opinion of ourselves: 'We are real spiritual aspirants. We only want the highest', or so we tell ourselves. We practise meditation to gain control over the mind, eliminate all the *vruttis*, thought-disturbances, of the mind, and have the vision of the Self within, the divine presence of the indwelling Lord. And we hope, as Swamiji says, that we may enter into meditation as a fool, but emerge as a saint. This is the formula that we have read about and heard about for so many years. And it is a beautiful formula. And wouldn't it be nice if it actually worked that way! Of course it does in rare cases, but on some level, such fruits are like the sweets left for the monks by Brahmananda. They almost seem to good-naturedly mock our childish understanding of meditation.

As you may have gathered, I do not want to speak about such high and almost out-of-reach fruits of meditation as God-realisation, perfect control of the mind and senses, samadhi, and the

like. These are all the fruits of a very advanced stage of meditation. It is nice to hear about them, to understand them, to look upon them as the ideal goal. But at the same time, we have to realistically consider to what extent they apply to us. And so, I would like to look at this question from a different angle, one that is a bit more appropriate for the stage of spirituality that most of us are in. In fact, I want to look at the question from almost an opposite point of view: not what are the fruits of meditation as it is ideally practised, but meditation as we currently practise it. In a sense, to examine what we gain by continued 'bad' meditation, or put in a kinder light, 'ordinary' meditation, where the mind constantly struggles to have even a momentary period of concentration and joy. Because when we take a realistic look at our meditation, most of us will have to admit that it is more struggle than joy, and that our successes in controlling the mind fall far short of our failures.

I think this question is of much more personal interest to most of us, because, first of all, this is unfortunately the common predicament many of us find ourselves in. And secondly, we sometimes wonder if there is any benefit at all to the kind of meditation we read about in the *Yoga Sutra* and other texts. We may wonder: 'Are we just spinning our wheels, rowing an anchored boat or are we making progress despite ourselves, which will yield its own kind of fruit in the future?' I would argue very strongly for the latter assertion and would even go so far as to say that there are special fruits that come from a struggling type of meditation: fighting the mind, senses, passions, the aches, and pains of the body, and the pull of sleep. For, the mere fact that we continue with this type of meditation indicates a depth of devotion and steadfastness, a real longing for spiritual attainment, and that itself is one of the great fruits of meditation.

I want to discuss three different, though related, varieties of fruits of meditation. They will not be the standard items we have come to expect through our reading of Vedanta and yoga, because none will seem to be directly related to concentration and control of the mind. The three are devotion, transformation, and conviction. Each one is a great blessing and each one comes as a result of a different type of meditation or a different aspect of meditation.

Devotion

Many years ago I heard Swami Swahananda make a statement that I found to be remarkable and which has remained with me ever since. He said that devotion was the real fruit of meditation. I have thought about that remark for a long time and have come to realise how accurate it is. I have seen it in my own life. I have been practising meditation for over forty-five years and do not find much appreciable progress in being able to control the mind. In fact, it seems to be the same old restless, turbulent mind. And perhaps it will get even harder to control as we get older and

the mind loses its vigour, and the body intrudes with more aches and pains. So from the point of view of mind control, I don't find much in the way of tangible fruits from such meditation. But I have observed that after all these years, I have definitely gained something in the way of devotion. And that small gain is indeed a rare and great thing.

Now, why should it be so, that the ostensible purpose of meditation—control of the mind—yields little fruits, but the side effect is so appealing, namely the increase in devotion? There are various reasons, no doubt, but it is partly due to the nature of our meditation. Though we often emphasise the teachings of Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra*, we nevertheless find that meditation as generally taught and practised within the Ramakrishna tradition is as much a devotional exercise as a meditative one. One of the great points of emphasis by Sri Ramakrishna himself was that God is most manifest in the heart of a God-realised soul or a divine incarnation, and that meditation on one of these great souls is the same as meditation on God. So it is quite natural



that repeated meditation on a divine personality will result in greater and greater devotion. But the surprising thing is that the degree of devotion we feel is not always the result of our ability to keep the mind fixed on our chosen deity. In fact, an argument can be made for the exact opposite, for our failure to fix the mind on the image of God in meditation may actually increase our longing for the vision of God.

In a sense it is a classic case of *viraha* bhava, a feeling of separation from the beloved that results in greater longing for union and which keeps the mind occupied with the thought of the beloved. And this longing grows not simply in the absence of the beloved, but because of the absence. So, if we have even a drop of devotion and longing to remember our chosen deity at the time of meditation, that longing will increase despite our repeated failure, and in some sense, because of those failures. It is important to remember that Sri Ramakrishna once replied to the question as to why we should perform sadhana by saying it will increase our *vyakulata*, our anguish at not having realised God, the pain of separation from the object of our worship. So devotion and longing are the fruits of this devotional type of meditation, regardless of how adept we are at focusing and concentrating the

mind, or rather in spite of our inability to focus and concentrate the mind.

This is one of the reasons why it is so important to be very regular in our spiritual practices. It is more to keep that fire of devotion burning than to increase our powers of concentration, though that certainly is a large part of our goal. But it is the day in and day out practice of meditation, when we feel least inspired to do it, when the body is aching, when we feel sleepy, when the mind is restless, that seems to bear the greatest fruits of devotion in the long run. So that at the end of long years of practice we may feel, 'Yes, I have attained a small measure of real devotion'. And this will seem like the greatest treasure to us.

Transformation

The second great fruit of meditation that I would like to address is transformation. We hear a great deal about the transformation that takes place through meditation when we become deeply concentrated on the object of meditation. A kind of transference of qualities is said to come about. We take on the attributes of the chosen ideal that we meditate upon. If we meditate on the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, we should automatically grow in compassion, patience,



and forbearance. We should catch a little of her universal love, her sweetness, and joy. And if we meditate on Sri Ramakrishna, we should pick up a bit of that ecstatic mood, spiritual exaltation, and divine emotions. As they say, the more we handle flowers, the more the sweet scent of the flowers will stick to our hands.

But again, all this depends on a very intense type of concentration, which, we know, is a relatively rare thing. What about our more ordinary kind of meditation: a little concentration and a little wandering, some more concentration and some more wandering. I still think we experience a bit of the transference of divine qualities, but I also find that another process takes place: a transformation of the ego, of our sense of who we are. We begin to experience ourselves in terms of our chosen ideal, we feel a sort of intimacy, we belong to the same family, Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother become like our own father and mother. Or we feel ourselves to be Sri Ramakrishna or Holy Mother's servant, their faithful devotee.

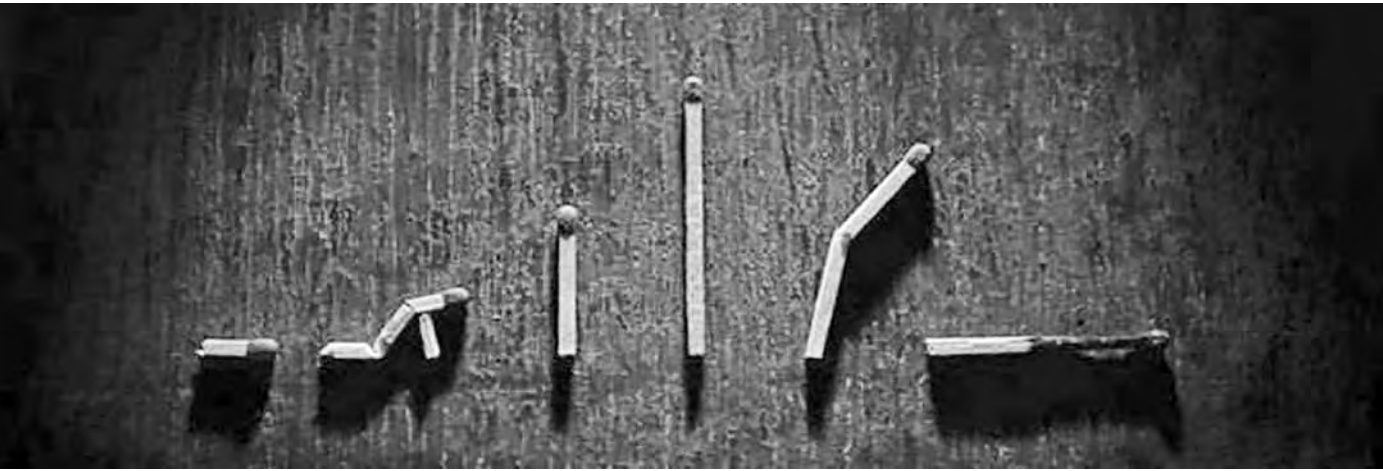
And this was exactly Sri Ramakrishna's prescription for devotion: establishing a relationship with our chosen ideal; transforming the nature of our own ego; ripening it, removing the strong sense of identification we normally feel with the body and mind, family, friends, even our own personality. Then we find that, without even realising it, we are meditating on our chosen ideal throughout the day, practising constant recollection, and ultimately practising surrender to their divine will. And this spirit of surrender is such a great fruit of our spiritual practices that we can legitimately think of it as a kind of divine grace. Then we realise that all this came about as the fruits of unflagging, sincere spiritual practice, regular meditation, whether good or bad, whether with concentration or without, but always with sincerity and effort. We realise that

it was the struggle, the longing for union with God, which was the real catalyst for our transformation and the real cause for the devotion that we now recognise as our greatest treasure. And a large part of this transformation has to do with the third fruit of meditation, namely conviction. We will see how unwavering faith and conviction will be one of the chief fruits of meditation and one of the greatest blessings in our spiritual life.

Conviction

One of the terms which Sri Ramakrishna used most often was *vishvasa*, which is often translated as 'faith'. For various reasons, partly to distinguish it from the term *shraddha*, and partly because Sri Ramakrishna placed an especially high value on the term, I prefer the word, 'conviction'. This may not sound like quite a remarkable 'fruit' of meditation, but before we get too disappointed, we should take a look at what Sri Ramakrishna says about conviction, or faith: 'Have faith and you will achieve everything.'³ 'God can be attained through faith alone' (310). 'If one has faith one has everything' (849). 'The most important thing is faith. "As is a man's meditation, so is his feeling of love; As is a man's feeling of love, so is his gain; And faith is the root of all." If one has faith, one has nothing to fear' (241). And when faith reaches the point of perfect, unwavering conviction, it becomes an indispensable aid to God-realisation, almost reaching the state of realisation itself.

The term *vishvasa* can be defined in various ways: as confidence, trust, reliance, faith, belief, or conviction. It comes from the root *shvas*, meaning 'to breathe', and with the preposition *vi*, it means 'to draw breath freely, without fear or doubt, to be trustful and confident'. How do we begin this journey to conviction, where we feel we can finally breathe freely the air of



Brahman? There are, of course, various steps and different journeys for all of us. Some of us are basically skeptics; others have a natural faith, as if they were born with it. Among the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, we see both types. Swamiji, for example, was constantly questioning Sri Ramakrishna, while Swami Adbhutananda was the image of unquestioning faith and trust. In Swamiji's case, Sri Ramakrishna always encouraged this attitude of doubt. He used to tell Naren: 'You must test me as the money-changers test their coins. You mustn't accept me until you've tested me thoroughly.'⁴ Adbhutananda, on the other hand, had burning faith in the words of Sri Ramakrishna. Whatever he said was unquestioned truth to him. After being scolded for sleeping one evening when it was time for him to be meditating, he vowed never again to sleep at night, and spent the rest of his life observing that vow, remaining awake at night and taking a short nap during the day (403-4). And yet Swamiji and Adbhutananda, with such different attitudes, were both great spiritual giants in their own way.

Nevertheless, we find that they both had one trait in common, which is the essential attitude that can take us from belief to conviction, and that is *shraddha*. Though Swamiji questioned

Sri Ramakrishna constantly, he also had tremendous faith in him and his words. It is true that he would not accept anything blindly, but it is also true that he would not dismiss anything that he didn't understand. He would continue to test and probe until he came to see that everything Sri Ramakrishna had taught him was true. He had made it his own. He said: I have fought my Master for six years with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!⁵ Adbhutananda had that same unwavering faith in Sri Ramakrishna but never felt the need to analyse everything. He reached the same state of conviction through his method as did Swamiji through testing and questioning. And yet, the ultimate proof of Sri Ramakrishna's words often came as the fruits of meditation.

Examination

In this journey towards conviction, we often start with a set of ideas, theorems or hypotheses, which we accept, either provisionally or with some skepticism, but which we are committed to testing. We usually do this because we have great faith in the source of these ideas, which we may read about in the scriptures or hear from the lips of a great soul. We may analyse and use our

powers of discrimination and reason, but since the subject matter is consciousness itself, we do the most important work during meditation. It is here that we actually test the truths we hear about the nature of the Self.

How do we go about doing this? We are told that the real Self is beyond the surface mind and personality, that consciousness continues to function even when the mind is perfectly still and free from thought. In meditation we can experience the ego as an idea floating before the mind. We can see it as something essentially unreal, and that is why Sri Ramakrishna says that when we search for the 'I' we find God instead. This is not to say that we achieve a state of enlightenment through such glimpses. But we do develop a strong conviction regarding the nature of consciousness, the nature of our own individuality and ego sense. And as that conviction grows stronger and stronger, it develops into a kind of transforming realisation.

Fruits of Transformation and Conviction

The fruits of transformation are directly connected with the nature of the conviction that emerges through meditation. As we go on with our meditation, a sense of unreality comes with regard to the external world. The inner reality becomes so real to us that everything else takes on a distant and unrelated feel to it. We become aware of how transitory everything is in contrast to the unchanging and eternal nature of the Self. We develop the habit of watching without engaging, of acting as the witness, identifying with the higher Self. And this manifests in a kind of detachment. Even in our everyday life we find that we have learned to be the witness, not to take things so personally, not to get angry so quickly. We develop a kind of calmness, a feeling of peace not dependent on anything outside of ourselves, an unshakeability, all

of which give us great inner strength. And we find that this identification with the witnessing consciousness, which grows out of meditation and the conviction that the world is nothing but a passing show with no substance, leads to a special kind of calmness and detachment. And that is also one of the great fruits of a meditative life.

A second transformation that takes place as a result of conviction regarding our true nature is that we become selfless, loving and filled with compassion. This is only natural since the only bar to selfless love is the clinging we all have to our lower self, our ego, with all its needs and demands, all its pettiness and smallness. When one has the conviction that it is God alone who dwells within as the real Self and that it is God alone who has taken the form of all other beings, this becomes a natural attitude.

Conclusion

So, we can see the many fruits that come from meditation, both for the bhakta and the *jnani*. The devotee comes to feel a great sense of intimacy with one's chosen ideal and comes to depend more and more on God. Ultimately this leads to the state of *sharanagati*, perfect surrender to God, and this represents the final rung on the ladder leading to the roof of God-realisation.

And for the *jnani*, the fruits of conviction lead to their own kind of transformation. We become calm and peaceful, detached, and all-loving. We develop a different way of looking at the world. It no longer holds our interest the way it used to. And we find that a kind of conviction has come regarding the goal of life. We feel there is nothing worth having other than illumination, and this is the real test of conviction. The surprising thing about conviction and surrender is that they kind of sneak up on us. We hardly realise the nature and extent of the transformation that comes from years of sincere striving and meditation.




Swami Shivananda

There is a wonderful incident of one of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, who asked a question to Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The monk told Shivananda that he felt that though he had lived many years as a monk, he hadn't accomplished anything in spiritual life, that his meditation and spiritual practices hadn't yielded any fruits.

Shivananda replied in a serious tone: 'When nothing has come out of your spiritual practices for so many days, what shall you do? Go back to your home and lead a householder's life like your brothers.' Hearing this the monk said: 'No, that is no longer possible. All that has been completely erased from my mind.' Shivananda was happy to hear this and said: 'Then, know that you have indeed progressed in spiritual life. At least, you have understood

that the life of your brothers is full of problems and that you are in great peace. When you row a boat in crosscurrents with great difficulty, it seems that the boat is not moving forward at all. But, when you look at the date tree near the yonder bank, from where you started the journey, then you are convinced that you have made much progress. Know the same to be the case with this difficult path of spiritual life. Move forward with your faith in Sri Ramakrishna. Everything will happen by his grace.'⁶

Needless to say, the disciple remained a monk of the Order throughout his life.

We can easily see that devotion, transformation, conviction, surrender, dedication, and earnestness are all fruits of a meditative life. They may not be quite what we were expecting when we first start out as spiritual seekers, they may not represent the high states of meditation, bhava, samadhi, and the like. But they are some of the greatest blessings that we can have in spiritual life and lead directly to the highest illumination. When we experience these fruits of meditation, we will understand them to be just as tangible and enjoyable as the sweets and fruits left before the disciples by Brahmananda. And perhaps this was the message he wanted to convey with his seemingly innocent and playful trick. 

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Integrating Yoga into Our Daily Lives

Swami Atmajnananda

OF ALL THE TERMS that Indian philosophy has given to the Western world, 'yoga', by all standards, is the most popular and is generally understood as some techniques for a healthier living. After all, humans have always endeavoured to make themselves happier and every bit of knowledge has been used and is being used to prolong human existence and happiness. Human beings are the focus of all sciences and its various applications. Dr Alexis Carrel, in his famous book, *Man, the Unknown* says: 'Man in his entirety is located within the jurisdiction of the scientific

techniques. ... Man must turn his attention to himself ... The science of man makes use of all other sciences.'¹

Yoga is one science that has been able to touch all aspects of the human personality and therefore is the most widely practised. Practitioners of yoga in its various aspects are to be found in all parts of the globe today and interestingly some precepts of yoga can be seen in various cultures from ancient times. Subcultures of Africa, South America, and Australia had various rituals that were nothing short of meditations on the forces of nature with the intention to harness energy and to connect with Mother Earth. We are reminded of the various *upasanas* that are discussed in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* when

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we look at these nature worshipping cultures. The invading Westerners had little respect for indigenous cultures and most of the aboriginal practices have been decimated. Vipassana, Zen meditation practices, mindfulness of the Buddhists, and similar practices that are found in Taoism are all certainly influenced by ancient Indian yoga techniques, and in the modern times there have been so many schools of yoga with fan following too, to say the least. Yoga has also been misunderstood as an esoteric method to get a 'high' and was quite popularly associated with the hippie culture of the 1960s. However, after the initial enthusiasm subsided, a more balanced approach to yoga as a means to a holistic and integrated personality is seen today.

The Innate Urge for Integrating Our Personality

There has always been a 'discontent' among the human beings and the methods to assuage this feeling of loss—an unknown want that keeps us dissatisfied with all material things and pursuits, has been the single purpose of all religions. The irony is that the more we try to be happy, happiness eludes us. It is like the proverbial dog trying to catch its own tail! Swami Vivekananda puts it succinctly:

What makes men miserable? Because they are slaves, bound by laws, puppets in the hand of nature, tumbled about like playthings. We are continually taking care of this body that anything can knock down; and so we are living in a constant state of fear. ... we are always multiplying our wants. It is a morbid desire with us to multiply our wants. We have become so unhinged and unnatural that nothing natural will satisfy us. We are always grasping after morbid things, must have unnatural excitement—unnatural food, drink, surroundings, and life. As to fear, what are our lives but bundles of fear? The deer has only one class of fear, such as that

from tigers, wolves, etc. Man has the whole universe to fear.²

Science has been providing so many ways and means to keep us entertained but everything loses its sheen after the initial enthusiasm ends and we are back to square one. A mad rat race has begun and the human is not aware as to why he does what he does! We laugh at others' mistakes and see their lives as ruined, little realising that we are also in the same boat!

The *Mundaka Upanishad* uses a beautiful allegory to depict this conflict in the human being: 'Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, cling to the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating. On the same tree, the individual soul remains drowned or stuck, as it were; and so it moans, being worried by its impotence. When it sees thus the other, the adored Lord, and Lord's glory, then it becomes liberated from sorrow.'³ Here, the two birds are the two natures that we see in every human being: one worldly and the other spiritual. In other words, it is the conflict between the outgoing mind and senses on the one hand and the inner self that is the source of all our higher faculties on the other. Yoga can be defined as the method that leads to channelling the human faculties to higher purposes and thereby achieving a state of calm and rest that is associated with meditateness. Meditation is not possible without integration of personality. Swami Yatiswarananda defines human personality as, 'The unconscious part of us and the conscious part together make up what is called personality, which reaches out into its environment and in turn is affected by it.'⁴

Minding the Mind

All conflicts are in the mind; between its two parts: the higher and the lower. The *Amritabindu*

Upanishad says: 'Mind alone is the cause for bondage as well as liberation in the human being.'⁵ Resolution of conflicts in the mind that affect our personality can be done by integrating yoga into our life. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgita*: 'The yogi must constantly integrate the faculties of body, mind, and soul so that one can be free from all distractions that bind the yogi.'⁶ Yoga is more about aligning our inner being than postures or breath control.

While Semitic religions view the human being as a fallen angel, who has to get back to heaven by being true to God, the Oriental religions have held that the human can raise itself to the divine by controlling nature, external and internal. The science of culturing our body, senses, and mind by trying to go within, became yoga and the science of controlling and using external nature became the various branches of science. Both have helped humanity immensely and have provided answers to the puzzle of human existence. While science has also made way for

destructive technology and weapons, and the like, the path of yoga has benefited the human beings, individually and also made them more universal in their outlook, thereby fostering better understanding and peace.

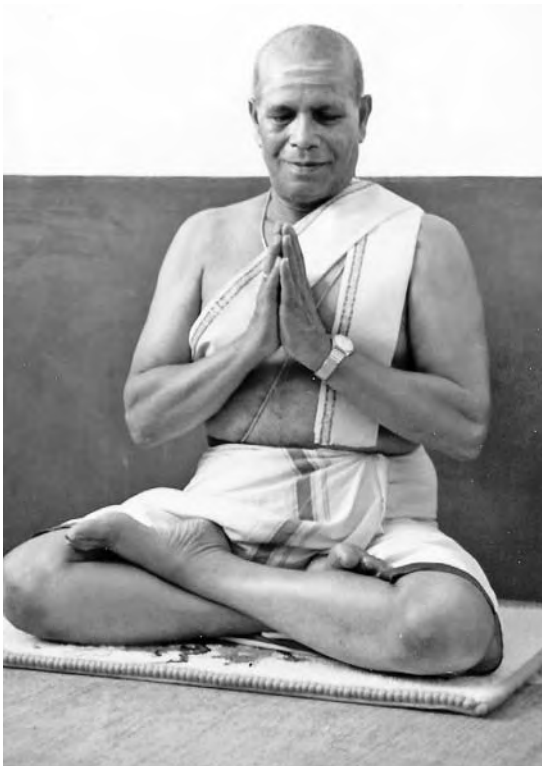
However, the present-day world has become more obsessed with the external and consequently there are atypical conflicts that rage within the human mind. For example, selfie culture has started taking its toll on a smartphone-obsessed generation with accidents involving mobiles being reported on a daily basis. Getting killed while taking selfies on train tracks and being oblivious of the approaching train or being hit on roads while driving vehicles and taking selfies at the same time, make us think, 'Is life so unimportant, so worthless that you do not care to protect yourself?'

The seriousness of the problem is better understood when one sees the mobile de-addiction counselling unit that has been set up at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro



Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, where youngsters who are hooked to the Internet and their smartphones are provided treatment! There, one can very well see aggressive behaviour and withdrawal symptoms just as in those addicted to drugs. What a sheer waste of human life when there are such wonderful opportunities with the advancement of science and technology? We have begun to invest smartness in machines and given it intelligence too, whereby the fear of artificial intelligence taking over the human race has started. Whither is our destiny? The modern generation is passing through turbulent times, be it with reference to politics, economics, or human conflicts. Various 'isms' and 'ideologies' have stolen the limelight and everything seems to end in violence and altercation. So, yoga as a path to integral personality is becoming popular with good reason.

K Pattabhi Jois (1915–2009)



The Age of Yoga

Swamiji's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 turned the attention of the so-called progressive West towards the brooding East and just as Swamiji said in his response to the welcome on 11 September 1893, acceptance and assimilation of other religions and cultures has entered the minds of the present-day thinkers.⁷ There were times when famous people like Rudyard Kipling held opinions like, 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'.⁸ James S Ross, an educationist, writes: 'The Western mind, absorbed as it has been in the advancement of physical sciences, finds it difficult to understand the more contemplative Eastern mind and to appreciate its values.'⁹

However, great thinkers like Arthur Schopenhauer and William James have acknowledged the influence of Upanishads and yoga in their learning. 'In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Oupnekhat [Upanishads]. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death',¹⁰ says Schopenhauer while James acknowledged that 'the most venerable ascetic system, and the one whose results have the most voluminous experimental corroboration is undoubtedly the Yoga system in Hindustan'.¹¹ Exclusivity is fast disappearing and a truly global culture is emanating. Yoga has a great role to play in integrating the nations of the world. Yogic practitioners are coming from all over the world to experts who can teach the philosophy of yoga and the names of B K S Iyengar and K Pattabhi Jois have become synonymous with yoga.

Yoga Properly Understood

Yoga was conceived essentially as a synthesis, as a method to achieve individual harmony by channelling all human faculties to attain higher ends, which in turn would result in the happiness of the

masses and good of the many, *bahujana sukhaya*, *bahujana hitaya*, for the happiness of many, for the good of many. Unfortunately, many are under the wrong notion that yoga, the science of integral development of the human being, is merely a physical discipline or a kind of gymnastics. The effects of yoga on the mind, the healing aspects that it has by soothing our strained nerves through the direction of our internal forces to nobler pursuits are sidelined by those who practise it for physical well-being or for prolonging their youthfulness. Interestingly, yoga attracted the attention of Western psychologists like William James who tried to unravel the mysteries of intuition and spiritual states and Dr Roberto Assagioli of Italy, who studied yoga extensively and introduced its methods in psychotherapy. Dr Alfonso Caycedo, former President of the International Society of Sophrology and Psycho-somatic Medicine, is of the opinion that the scientific methodology of Western psychotherapy and yoga must be combined to help ease the human mind from modern-day tensions. He says that yoga is more exhaustive, more thorough, and better structured.

Yoga starts with correcting ailments that affect the body; liberating the practitioner from limitations and disabilities, frustration and anxiety through relaxation and control of restlessness. The preparatory stages of *yama* and *niyama* train the mind to become alert and fully aware of the workings of the body and also to study itself. The outgoing senses are withdrawn and focussed on the inner beauty of the person, the spiritual core of human nature. It is like the teacher showing the disciple that there is a hidden mine of precious diamonds within and so why bother about cheap glitter of the outside world. This turning within requires tremendous will power and strength of conviction. Therefore, the Upanishads proclaim that the path of yoga is not for the faint-hearted. All strengths available at our disposal must be

harnessed and only then can the door to immortality be opened. Yoga prepares the aspirant by fine tuning her or his system, so that the person can receive the powerful surge of energy when the flood gates of realisation are opened. The conduit must be capable of withstanding intense pressure and yield not to alluring powers that can come when the mind is focussed and when prana is controlled.

Bringing Yoga to Our Rescue

There is harmony within the individual when the body, mind, and soul are integrated. Only when one realises that there is an eternal principle within the finite human and this spiritual quotient is in each person, irrespective of caste, creed, race, or sex, she or he would have attained the true purpose of yoga—the removal of all distinctions and differences and reaching the point of union of the individual spirit with the universal Spirit.

In our daily life we are not aware of the different dimensions of the human system. When we are busy working, we do not take care of our mind or the emotions and are often obsessed with the desire to be successful at every level. We seek constant praise and approbation indicating the hollow within our personality. We fragment our human system and use parts of it disconnectedly and this is the cause for all the strain and stress. We are unable to quench our thirst for fame and power and miserably fail on the material front. The resulting dissatisfaction enhances our mental struggles and we end up bankrupt of all strength and enthusiasm in life. We look upon ourselves as not ‘whole’ but as loosely connected faculties.

With all the advancement in science, medicine, and the science of psychology, we have not been able to point out the demarcations between the body and the mind or the intellect and the emotions. In and through all these faculties, the Atman or the individual soul functions, and

when we achieve a harmonious blending of all these faculties, we could be integrated. Conflicts between the desires of the body and the aspirations for a higher life that result in guilt or suppression lead to serious psychological problems and similarly conflicts between the head and the heart can make a person too dry and harsh or namby-pamby. In the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, defects that afflict all individuals are mentioned: *avidya*, ignorance and *asmita*, sense of pride. Wrong understanding and ego are born in the mind while *raga*, attachment born of desires and *dvesha*, hatred due to unfulfilled desires are emotional issues. Above all, there is *abhinivesha*, or wrong identification with the body that results in anxiety and fear when old age grips us.¹² The fear of death is an existential crisis that torments all those, who have not had a glimpse of the higher dimensions of the human life. Yoga teaches us about the spiritual dimension of the human personality; about how to get over all anxieties and worries by delinking ourselves from all that makes us confined to the psycho-physical system and linking us to the eternal existence within.

Sri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to be a yogi,¹³ because the path of yoga is superior to the control of body functions through asceticism, it is also superior to mere intellectual understanding and is higher than efficiency in work or diligent performance of one's duties. Here, there is a beautiful insight into what essentially is yoga. It is much more than the constituent parts of the discipline and the results that accrue from such practices. Yoga is essentially a union of all our strengths with the core of our existence and therefore Sri Krishna says in the very next verse that 'he whose inner being is united with me, the conscious principle, is best integrated' (6.47).

The paths that are prescribed to forge this union can be grouped under the four yogas, namely: jnana yoga—the path of discrimination

to disassociate the mind from nonessentials and assertion of the Self through intellectual understanding, resulting in the experience of the Truth within and without. Bhakti yoga—the path of devotion to the Lord of the universe, who is also the indwelling divine principle, with loving worship and bonding like that of a child to its mother or as a lover to his beloved or as the loyalty of the servant to his master or as the singular attraction that the money lender has towards money as the main tools.

Karma yoga—the path of dedicating all the fruits of action to God and thereby effacing the idea of 'I', the doer and enjoyer of actions, also described as 'work for work's sake' wherein the individual is deeply attached to the work but also equally unattached to the results of action. Such a karma yogi is able to accept success and failures with equipoise and does not work like a slave as Swamiji puts it. Even without believing in a God, the karma yogi can attain to the highest by training the mind and emotions through unattached work says Swamiji. The traditional view is that work leads to purification of the mind and in such a pure mind, knowledge dawns. Swamiji emphatically says that work itself can bring about realisation of the highest and is not a *via media*.

Raja yoga—the path of psychic control and directing the latent spiritual force towards higher centres of consciousness till the individual merges with the supreme in samadhi. Samadhi is of two main categories, *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. Samadhi is the last stage of ashtanga yoga as enunciated by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutra*. *Dhara*na or fixing the mind on a particular centre of consciousness leads to dhyana or unwavering concentration. In this stage the person is still aware of oneself as the meditator, of the object of meditation, and also of the process by which one has reached that state. When dhyana reaches the higher stage of samadhi, there is no awareness

of self or the process and only the object remains resplendent. There is only awareness of the One and all ideas of separateness or distinction are lost. It is a smooth merger or integration of all the human faculties and the yogi is lost in the bliss of self-awareness called *atmarati* and *atmani avasthita* in the Upanishads and the Gita.

Patanjali mentions two types of samadhi, *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata*. In the former, there is awareness of the object of meditation although in a very reduced form, while in the latter all distinctions are effaced. These states are similar to the *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa* states. As these are intuitive experiences, they cannot be verbally explained to the satisfaction of the listener. Sri Ramakrishna would say that he had to come down a great deal to couch his transcendental experiences in language, however much he wanted to explain these higher states to the disciples and devotees. He would also say that it is as if the Mother is pressing his throat, making him incapable of expressing the higher states of samadhi.

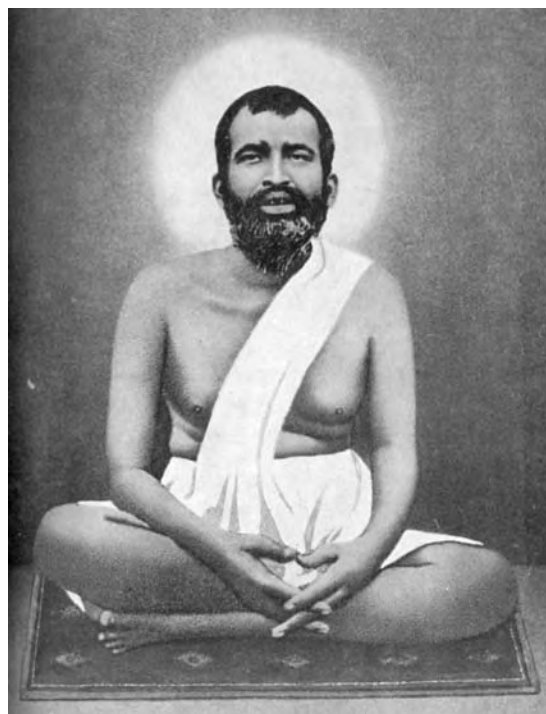
Sri Ramakrishna, the Completely Integrated Person

Where shall we find someone who has used yoga in all its shades and aspects to reach the pinnacle of human experience consistently, in whom there is no dichotomy, no pretensions but a manifestation of the most exalted character? Look no further, for we have in the life of Sri Ramakrishna all that yoga truly represents. He can be the yardstick to measure yogic realisation in other individuals. He has set the standards and made yoga popular silently through his great life. Take for instance, the wonderful integrity of his intuitive experiences with his entire thinking and actions. Never was there any harsh note in his personality and every aspect of his was charming to say the least. His frequent samadhis, the divine absorption that bordered on madness, but yet intensely caring and

respectful even to those who were despised by society; not possessing anything to call his own; his high regard for women, and many more that truly describe the ways of a yogi, who has united with the highest. In spite of themselves, people got attracted by the clarity with which he expressed his unifying message that embraced all religious practices that humans profess. His pristine life shone like the light of the lighthouse that directs many a ship in the vast and turbulent oceans. He is the best example of the yogi who has achieved integral vision. He would often say that he has come to build and never destroy. This unprecedented catholicity is indicative of the *yoga-arudha* state, of one who is firmly established in yoga, which is described in the Gita. (6.4).

Yoga for All


By studying Sri Ramakrishna, we realise that yoga is meant for all. If there be an intense longing to attain to the highest state that is also called God



realisation, then any method will be sufficient. It is never too late to practise yoga and train the human faculties. Sri Ramakrishna had his first disciple in his wife, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. He had instructed her thoroughly in all the intricacies of yoga. Holy Mother says that Sri Ramakrishna had drawn the picture of the kundalini and the six yogic centres for her. However, Holy Mother did not realise the importance of retaining that picture for future use. That was but natural as she was more keen on attaining the yogic states as taught by her adept husband rather than hold on to a piece of paper. This is a clear demonstration that yoga is an internal discipline and not mere external observances.¹⁴

Just as youngsters came to Sri Ramakrishna, there was Elder Gopal, later Swami Advaitananda, and many devotees like Girish Chandra Ghosh, Ramachandra Datta, and Surendra Mitra, who were householders and who took to spiritual life when they were in their forties and soon achieved remarkable results. Again, Sri Ramakrishna shaped the illiterate Latu, who later became Swami Adbhutananda, to such an extent that he could grasp the most intricate aspects of spiritual experiences. So, one need not put off taking to spiritual life or yoga citing problems with age or educational background.

In conclusion, when one becomes completely integrated, that is true spiritual life or the yogic state. In that state there is absolute harmony within and without. Such a yogi is able to get into another's mind and resolve the problems of others and help humanity in unprecedented ways. Using these yogic powers or siddhis can result in the yogi forgetting the true purpose of yoga, which is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. True yogis or spiritual masters are the greatest blessings that we have. They infuse in us the confidence to move ahead by following their footsteps and holding on to

the eternal dimension within each one of us for support in trying circumstances. Our whole life must be one of yoga, wherein we become masters of our inner selves and radiate peace and harmony without. Yoga is one way through which we can bring nations and individuals together without encroaching on their personal beliefs and faiths. There is a dire need for the assimilation of the wonderful principles of yoga in the educational system so that students learn to train their mind and also in the health sector to promote holistic treatment. Having stood the test of time for thousands of years, the principles of yoga are more relevant today. Hence, 'let's yoga' is catching up with the younger generation too. 

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Sri Ramakrishna: Praxis, Perfection, and Culmination of Yoga

Swami Satyamayananda

ONE DAY a close devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Bhavanath Chatterjee of Baranagore, tried to convince an unwilling

Swami Satyamayananda is Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Sri Ramakrishna to be photographed. Although the Master did not agree, Bhavanath went ahead with his plan and brought a professional photographer along, the next day, to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna simply ambled out of his room, when Bhavanath and the photographer arrived, and strolled in the temple courtyard while

heading towards the Radhakanta temple. In the meantime, Narendranath Datta, later Swami Vivekananda, arrived and was told everything, and having understood the situation, said: 'Wait a bit. I shall put everything straight.' Swamiji began a conversation on a religious topic with Sri Ramakrishna, who was seated on an asana, prayer rug, on the temple veranda. Sri Ramakrishna immediately went into samadhi. It was then that Swamiji called out to Bhavanath and the photographer to quickly photograph the Master. This was a blessed day for the world when we obtained the sacred picture of Sri Ramakrishna. And Sri Ramakrishna later on seeing a print of the picture brought by Bhavanath declared: 'This represents a high yogic state. This form will be worshipped in every home as time goes on.'¹

We see Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy coming true. And as time rolls on, people from all walks of life will worship, practice, and ultimately realise the 'high yogic state', as embodied by Sri Ramakrishna. In this age of spurious, counterfeit, inauthentic, and deviant forms of yoga practices, the 'Great Master' is the genuine face of yoga.

Humanity Advancing Towards Higher Mental Evolution

Humanity is more cognitively developed than ever before in its long history. Whether it is evolution that is slowly pushing us or whether we are driving evolution, by gaining knowledge of evolution, is not pertinent here. The fact remains that humanity finds itself endowed in a preparatory state for the science of yoga to take roots. Or, the science of yoga must have anticipated this leap in human consciousness, and that is why its huge popularity worldwide. As one studies authentic yoga literature it becomes clear that the methodology is primarily meant for people of highly developed cognitive skills, intellectual abilities, and a daring spirit.

Humankind has been redefining and redesigning itself and the world for around 10,000 years and more. We just need to look around to notice this fact. Moreover, today's humanity is more comfortable with rational lines of thoughts and systems, than belief systems. And yoga has rightly dispensed with beliefs, and we all know how fanatical and limited belief systems make us. Yoga puts forward a practical methodology, which has been tested for about 5,000 years in India, and invites us to see the results for ourselves. However, though yoga has a long history in India its higher practices never became the common property of humanity. This was going to be changed by the *yogishvara*, Lord of yoga. In the Bhagavadgita, we find Sri Krishna addressed thus, we also find in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature that Sri Ramakrishna is the *yogishvara* of this age.

What is Yoga?

Yoga is: 'Controlling the mind-stuff from breaking into waves.'² Why should one go about it at all? The sceptic might thus demand. The answer is: all the higher possibilities of the individual can be actualised through controlling the mind. This is not counter-intuitive! All the sciences, arts, humanities, civilisations, and cultures underline the fact that the control and direction of the mental energies is essential for individual and social well-being. However, although humankind is progressing, the animal in us is becoming more ferocious. This is due to the mind being still steeped in materialism and it does not bode well for civilisations and races. There are more people afflicted with mental health problems than ever before. In case such people take up any of the yoga practices they might become more mentally unbalanced. Materialism never was, is, and will be, the last word in anything; it might bring us a little comfort and efficiency to operate in the world but the very foundation

of individuals and societies is spirituality and yoga goes to the very foundations of spirituality. This is the reason why the more one controls the mind the more one progresses.

The common sense view of most people is to equate the mind with consciousness; Yoga teaches you the opposite. Mind is a mere mode of activity of the internal instrument, *antahkara*. If mind can be thought of as energy, then we can see that this energy is staggeringly diverse. Almost all the various burgeoning branches of knowledge are limited to a tiny bandwidth of consciousness. Yoga has discovered the whole spectrum of consciousness, ages ago, beyond the senses and the mind!

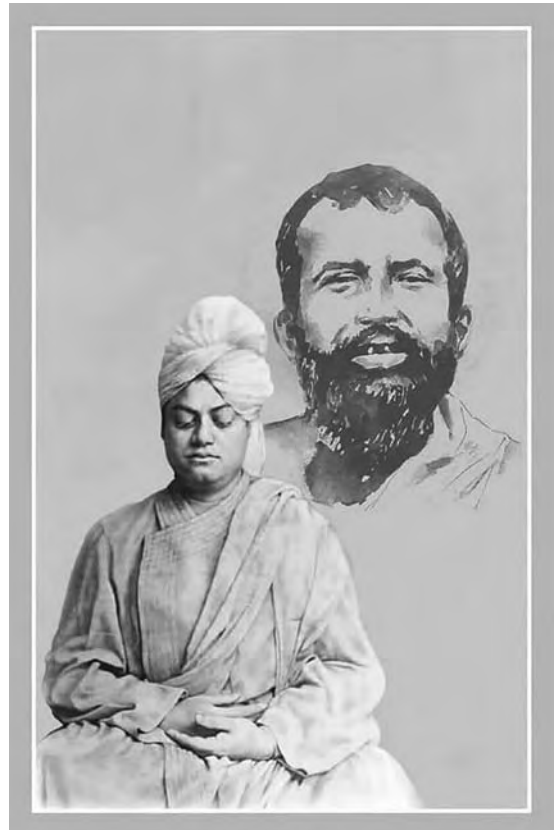
Even though all knowledge deals and concerns the perceptible world yet there is an abstract aspect to all knowledge that transcends the tangible and perceptible world. For some people this is the key to counter all the claims of religion and spirituality that have been poisoning peoples' minds and cultures for thousands of years. Thus as all types of knowledge and technology are daily increasing, so is the claim that there is nothing divine; everything is material. Even if human-kind embodies the abstract, or the Logos, or the psychic self, it can be explained in terms of neural and other networks in the brain and body, and not the result of the trickle-down effect of higher dimensions of consciousness. This is the reason why, limited to this tiny bandwidth, the increase of secular knowledge is also increasing the bounds and bonds of ignorance. Of course, we are not doing badly given all the limitations.

In order to rise higher to the other bandwidths of consciousness, one has to transcend or give up the lower ones. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when the mind dwells in the three lower centres of consciousness it is engrossed with lust and greed. Only when the mind is controlled and raised to the level of the heart does

yoga begin. Just as there are laws that govern the phenomenal world, discovered by science, the science of yoga too investigated and discovered laws that govern the higher dimensions of consciousness, in order to attain perfection. For the last several decades, humans have been manipulating and tinkering with genes to redesign or build new species, because of discovering the basis of genetic laws. Yoga's discovery of laws that govern consciousness hastens spiritual growth of an individual and society. That is the reason why one should not seek material benefits from this science or judge it by material standards.

In a much generalised, but in a very powerful and lucid manner, Swamiji puts forth the claims of yoga:

That a perfect man, that is to say, the type that is to come of this race, perhaps millions of years



hence, that man can come today. And this is what the Yogis say, that all great incarnations and prophets are such men; that they reached perfection in this one life. We have had such men at all periods of the world's history and at all times. Quite recently, there was such a man who lived the life of the whole human race and reached the end—even in this life.³

That man was Sri Ramakrishna!

To paraphrase Swamiji's ideas, before he arrives at the conclusion above: Every foetus, in the womb, goes through almost the entire evolutionary history of its species but quickly. The child, after birth, continues to live the life of its ancestry. And since the age of about two years the child is a little savage—it crushes the butterfly under its feet. As the child becomes socially integrated by the age of four and five, she or he goes through the civilisational history of the race. The child goes out to receive education, training, and so on, becoming a useful or useless, member of the race pertaining to the present stage of civilisation. Then the individual dies and leaves offspring, perhaps, to continue the cyclic process.

We can only travel so far—from the past to the present. The avatars can live the entire lives of not just the human race but of the whole evolutionary life, and reach the present quickly. They then proceed into the future—the future that humanity or evolution would lead us to. This was done by Sri Ramakrishna in this age, and we in worshipping him, worship our future self, future of humanity, and the future of the whole world of living beings. A tremendous opportunity has presented itself to humanity in the form of Sri Ramakrishna, who also as Swamiji writes in his vesper hymn, dedicated to and describing Sri Ramakrishna that is daily sung by millions of devotees worldwide: '*Jrimbhita yuga ishvara, jagadishvara, yoga sahay; nirodhana samahita*

mana, nirakhi tava kripay; you have manifested yourself as the *ishvara*, Lord, of the age, you are the Lord of the world, and the helper [in the science and practice] of yoga; you who are of controlled and one-pointed mind, I will be able to realise you only by your grace.'⁴ A tremendous statement indeed: Perfection is now given to us in the tangible form of Sri Ramakrishna. He has descended to help us in yoga in order to reach perfection, which is Sri Ramakrishna himself. That is the goal of all humanity and of all life.

What is Yoga, Again?

When Sri Ramakrishna says, 'This represents a high yogic state', he means samadhi. The highest form of samadhi, according to yoga philosophy, is called *asamprajnata* samadhi. According to Vyasa's commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, when *all* the modifications in the mind-stuff are perfectly stilled, this state of supreme Consciousness is actualised. This perfect samadhi is perfection and perfection is liberation, *kaivalya*, which is the goal of yoga. *Asamprajnata* includes and transcends all the states of the lower samadhi called *samprajnata*, which has various divisions such as, *ananda*, *asmita*, *nirvichara*, *savicahara*, *nirvitarka*, *avitarka*, and so on; and character of the mind-stuff such as, *kshipta*, restless; *mudha*, stupefied or dull; *vikshipta*, distracted; *ekagra*, one-pointed; and *niruddha*, completely controlled.

Concentration is possible in all these types of mind-stuffs but the concentration in the first three types is transient. It is when concentration is accomplished only in the one-pointed or controlled mind that it is called yoga. In the one-pointed concentration the bonds of karma become loosened and ignorance is diminished. *Asamprajnata* gives one the complete knowledge leading to liberation. Fluctuations in the mind-stuff also depend on the quality of the

mind—sattva, rajas, and tamas. *Asamprajnata* samadhi is the highest state of concentration possible for an embodied human being, in which not just the self and mind-stuff is transcended but also the world. In this state the body appears to be dead; one can never fake it. Even doctors could not determine that Sri Ramakrishna was alive, when he was in samadhi: 'Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar and other physicians examined the Master with their instruments but found no evidence that his heart was functioning. Another doctor (Dr. Sarkar's friend) was not satisfied, so he touched the Master's eye with his finger and found that it did not react: it was like the eye of a dead person.'⁵ The yogi, after samadhi, descends to this plane of the conscious and sub-conscious but becomes transfigured and transformed. This signifies and proves that the yogi ascends to a plane called superconsciousness.

Yoga or samadhi then means intense concentration, profound or abstract meditation, *samadhdhana*. In the yoga philosophy the word 'yoga' is not used in the sense of joining or yoking,

samyoga.⁶ One sees in the life of Sri Ramakrishna an intense one-pointed concentration and complete control of the mind, as well as a mind-stuff that was predominantly *sattvic*. Watching milk-white cranes flying in the dark-cloudy sky sent the young boy into samadhi; he could not bear people who were loud, uproarious, wicked, restless, lying, cheating, hypocrites, gluttons, lazy, and so on, signifying that his mind was *sattvic*. He could easily become absorbed in any task at hand and had his body and mind under perfect control. Even just before he could attain the highest *nirvikalpa* or *asamprajnata* state, he at his guru Totapuri's instruction, cleaved into two, the beautiful form of the Divine Mother with the sword of knowledge, which he worshipped all his life and who was more real to him than the world.

Yoga is Samadhi

Yoga is not simple breathing exercises, pranayama, and postures, asanas, meant for a healthy and strong body and mind. In the higher

The Hut at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna did his Vedanta Sadhana



practices the body appears to be dead or in an advanced state of hibernation. This is on the outside. Inside, the yogi attains absolute knowledge, for samadhi is the means to complete or super-conscious knowledge.

We see in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, when he attained the 'high yogic state' under the tutelage of his Vedanta guru Totapuri, who remained seated nearby for a long time in a small hut in the Panchavati, a grove of five trees. Totapuri, after watching over his disciple, then silently left the small hut in which they were, and locked the door shut so that no one could disturb Sri Ramakrishna while in that state. For, the body and the mind of such a person is poised and delicate and a malady or an internal injury can occur if the yogi is awakened suddenly by loud sounds or by shaking. Totapuri stayed like a sentinel near the door and waited for the samadhi to end. Three days passed in this way! Amazed and wondering, Totapuri unlocked and opened the door and found Sri Ramakrishna in the immobile yogic posture, with no external signs of life, but the face and body radiant. An expert in the laws of samadhi, Totapuri checked and rechecked the signs of samadhi and concluded that his disciple was absorbed in the highest Reality. 'He checked thoroughly to determine whether there was any heartbeat or even the slightest trace of respiration. He repeatedly touched the disciple's motionless body, seated like a piece of dead wood, and found no response, no change, or any sign of outer consciousness. Overwhelmed with joy and wonder, Tota cried out: "Ah! What a display of divine maya! This is real samadhi—nirvikalpa samadhi!"⁷ Sri Ramakrishna accomplished in three days what had taken Totapuri forty years! Later, Sri Ramakrishna dwelt in this highest state of yoga for six continuous months! Ordinary yogis do not come back from this state after twenty-one days.

Significance of Sri Ramakrishna's Yoga

When one is identified completely with Reality or God, one becomes God. Sri Ramakrishna's picture is thus that of God's. However, the body does not get identified with God but the Atman, but the body becomes a kind of doorway, a symbol, an object of prayers, worship, contemplation, and meditation. In a way Sri Ramakrishna brought down the 'high yogic state' down to our level. We can attain this state through his grace. He has done everything for us, as he says: 'I have cooked the meal, you all come and sit to eat. ... I have cast the mould, you put your mind into it and shape yourselves accordingly' (150).

During Sri Ramakrishna's six months of dwelling in cosmic Consciousness, identified with God, he received the command to stay in the state of *bhavamukha*, the state between the relative and absolute reality. Sri Ramakrishna realised that his body would be an instrument for the Divine to manifest and play in the world of spirit and matter. He realised fully that he was an avatar—ever free, yet one who descends to help humankind, and this has occurred before many times. His yogic practices were meant to eradicate the encrustations and corruptions in religion in the present age. The spiritual current that would arise from him would raise humanity to a next level of spiritual evolution and would continue to work for a long time in this world. People would get liberation or spiritual awakening by just coming to him and accepting him as an avatar, God embodied. His advent was for a special purpose for which God as the Divine Mother had brought him down to earth. That special purpose is to lift and raise sincere aspirants to God (316).

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

I imparted this imperishable yoga to Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught this to Manu, and Manu transmitted this to Ikshvaku. The king-sages knew



Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi at the Udbodhan Shrine

this yoga, which was received thus in regular succession. That yoga, O destroyer of foes, is now lost owing to a long lapse of time. That ancient yoga itself, which is this, has been taught to you by me, the Lord, today considering that you are my devotee and friend; for this yoga is a profound secret.⁸

This yoga is 'imperishable' and the Lord is the originator of this science of higher Consciousness. This time also that same Lord has come to remove the misconceptions, the encrustations, the deviations, and place before humanity that which was a secret, maintained only by the spiritual traditions of sages some of which were of royal lineage, because Sri Ramakrishna is the *dinabandhu*, friend of the lowly, we just need to

take refuge in him, as another hymn by Swamiji to Sri Ramakrishna says: '*Tasmat tvam eva sharanam mama dinabandhu*'; therefore I take refuge in you alone, who are the friend of the lowly.'⁹

Thus yoga, samadhi, or concentration has a new name and icon in this age: its name is Sri Ramakrishna; the icon is the well-known meditation posture. This is the door to the Infinite; inside that small bodily frame, dead to the world, is the Being that is identified with cosmic Consciousness, identified with God. We also need to become dead to the world to become identified with him. To be dead to the world is to eschew 'lust and greed'. Sri Ramakrishna taught that these two forces are obstacles to yoga. When we become dead to lust and greed, we can approach


that Sri Ramakrishna of cosmic proportions. Let us hasten to him who is *yogishvara*!

Conclusion

Looking at Sri Ramakrishna's picture, many people think, at times even devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, that this is just a picture, albeit a special one. On the other hand, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi actually saw Sri Ramakrishna in his picture and thus all her attention and actions were directed towards its worship and veneration. At times, she saw a ray of light coming out from the spot between the two eyes of Sri Ramakrishna when food was offered during worship. Holy Mother can be said to have begun the worship of Sri Ramakrishna in his picture while Sri Ramakrishna was still alive. One day, Sri Ramakrishna entered the Nahabat, the small room in which Holy Mother lived, on seeing his picture being worshipped, he said: 'Hello, what is all this?' Then he, amazingly, took the 'bel leaves and flowers kept there for worship and offered them at his own photograph.'¹⁰ This is a tremendous incident and has far reaching implications for us all. The reality of this incident will take a long time to be understood.

When Swami Arupananda, Holy Mother's disciple, asked if the Mother saw the living Master in the picture, she replied: 'Of course he does. The body and the shadow are the same. And what is his picture but a shadow?' (657). The long line of monastic and householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother along with innumerable monks and householders, even today, have experienced and realised Sri Ramakrishna's presence in the picture. Sri Ramakrishna's prediction: 'This form will be worshipped in very home as time goes on', is literally coming true in such a short time. However, another aspect has to be mentioned. Once some prints of Holy Mother's picture were made and shown to her.

She took it with both hands and then touched it with her forehead. Seeing her childlike action, I [Ashutosh Mitra] suppressed my laughter. When she returned the photo, I asked her, 'Mother, whose photo is this?' Like a simple girl, she replied, 'Why? It is my picture' I laughed. She asked, 'Why are you laughing?' I replied, 'Why did you salute it by touching it to your head?' She also laughed and finally said, 'The Master also dwells in it' (674).

Sri Ramakrishna dwells in all beings as the Atman, and in a way, the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the 'high yogic state' also represents us all—individually and collectively, the whole of humanity! In other words: the picture actually is our own reflection! We also, just like Holy Mother, can now laugh and say: 'Sri Ramakrishna also dwells in us, and we dwell in Sri Ramakrishna!' In this age by the Great Master's grace the attainment of the 'high yogic state' is open to all, who approach and accept him. 

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Asparsha Yoga

Swami Sarvapriyananda



GAUDAPADA'S *Mandukya Karika* is one of the root texts of Advaita Vedanta. In fact, Acharya Shankara considers that the four chapters comprising the text sum up the essence of all Vedanta.¹ The first chapter, '*Agama Prakarana*', where the *Mandukya Upanishad* is embedded, reveals the true self as the one consciousness underlying the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. The second chapter, '*Vaitathya Prakarana*', demonstrates the falsity of the world with the help of reasoning and experience while the third chapter, '*Advaita Prakarana*',

similarly demonstrates the truth of non-duality. The fourth and final chapter, '*Alatashanti Prakarana*', is more of a miscellany and includes a survey of several other philosophical viewpoints and their refutations.

Gaudapada uses the term '*asparsha yoga*', the way of no contact, to characterise the uniqueness of the nondual teaching. He uses this term twice in the *Mandukya Karika*.² As we shall see, this term offers us a unique insight into the very heart of Advaita Vedanta.

Duality and Samsara

Gaudapada identifies duality with samsara and non-duality with freedom from samsara. Acharya

Shankara writes that the goal is elimination of the misery of samsara by the cessation of the phenomenal universe of duality.³ Since this dualistic samsara is a creation of ignorance, it can be eradicated by the knowledge of the non-dual Brahman.

In the waking state, we experience a subject-object duality. There are things that we desire and we chase them, there are things that we are afraid of, that we try to avoid. Thus arise strife and struggle and this is samsara. Samsara is also constant change—birth, growth, ageing, decay, and death, and probably rebirth again, and this goes on. This is our waking experience.

Look upon our dream experience. In dreams also, we experience a similar changeful subject-object duality. Upon waking, the contents of the dream are realised to be false—‘It was just a dream’—we say, but during the dream, we do not question their reality. And so we have samsara in our dreams.

What about deep sleep? When we fall into deep sleep we experience neither the objects of the waking world, nor dream objects, we are not even aware of ourselves as sleeping. In deep sleep is there samsara? We do not experience samsara in deep sleep. Even a person with terrible problems in the waking world—maybe dying, in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a hospital—experiences none of one’s travails in deep sleep.

Notice that in deep sleep, duality is also not experienced, subject and object are also not experienced. Gaudapada seems to have a point when he says duality and samsara go together, and non-duality, where there is no subject and object, is freedom from samsara. But does that mean we should fall asleep and stay asleep? That doesn’t seem to be a solution, though it’s not as silly as it sounds because many people try to take that route. What else is drinking or taking drugs and trying to forget our sorrows? It’s basically a futile attempt to stop this experience of samsara, but that is no real route.

Actually, duality and samsara are there in deep sleep too, in a seed state, *bija avastha*. After we awaken from deep sleep, samsara comes back again—the same body, the same physical problems, the same financial problems, relationship problems—all of them come back again. This means they were there all along, even in deep sleep.

Acharya Shankara, in his introduction to the *Mandukya Karika*, writes: ‘For a sick person, curing the disease is attainment of health’ (ibid.).⁴ Health is the natural state. Similarly, non-duality is liberation from samsara. Dvaita is bondage and Advaita is liberation. Just as a rope is erroneously perceived to be a snake, the nondual Brahman is erroneously seen as the dualistic universe.

No Mind

Next, in the third chapter of the *Mandukya Karika*, Gaudapada points out the relation between mind, duality, and samsara. He says: ‘Notice that duality is linked to the functioning of the mind—where there is mind there is duality, where there is no mind there is non-duality.’ ‘All this duality—all that moves or does not move—is perceived by the mind [and therefore all this is but the mind]; for when the mind becomes no mind, duality is no longer perceived.’⁵

Gaudapada uses an elegant expression, *amani bhava*, which means ‘no mind’. The key idea we get is that when the mind becomes no mind, there is no more duality and no more samsara.

The problem of liberation and samsara is actually the problem of Dvaita and Advaita, duality and non-duality. The problem of duality and non-duality is further reduced to the problem of mind and no mind.

So, what is this ‘no mind’? A gentleman, intrigued, asked me: ‘Does it mean not thinking or being unconscious. What does it mean to have no mind?’

Clearly, we saw that when the mind does not function in deep sleep, there seems to be no duality but then Gaudapada himself points out the seed of duality is there in deep sleep. Deep sleep is not a solution. What about meditation, samadhi? According to Patanjali, as long as the mind functions, as long as there are *vruttis* in the mind, the self will be identified with those *vruttis* and the real nature of the self will not be realised. The solution is samadhi, cessation of all *vruttis*. When you meditate and then all the *vruttis* of the mind settle down and the world is not perceived. This is actually not what Gaudapada means by no mind, but before we go any further, there is a very important principle to grasp here which has great practical consequences for us. Spirituality or no spirituality, yoga or no yoga, Vedanta or no Vedanta, all the samsara and suffering that you and I experience, we experience in our minds. Let's think about it.

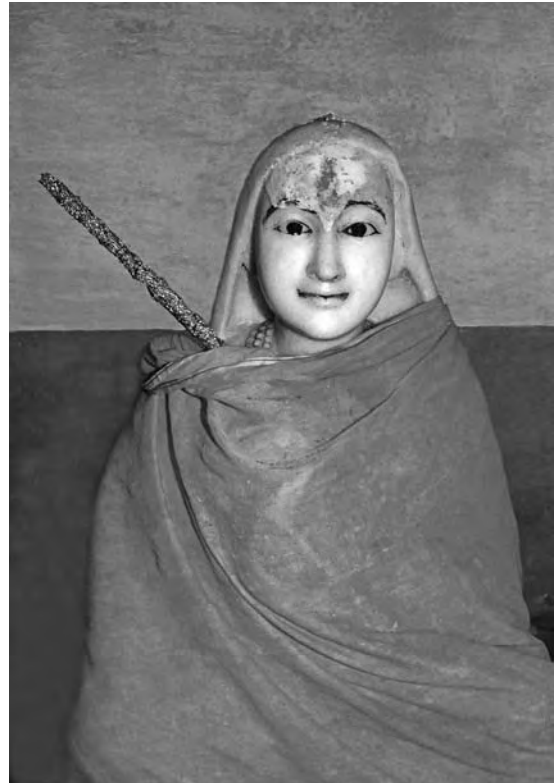
Every experience that we have had till now, and whatever experience we will have from now on, all are experiences in the mind—without mind, no experience. You might say, no, there are things existing outside regardless of whether we experience them or not. Actually, what is happening is, when you look at some flowers, the light falling on those flowers is reflected back to your eyes. In the lens of the eyes an image is formed—note that already at this stage, what has entered your eyes is light, not the flower itself. If the flower entered your eyes, you'd be blinded! What enters our eyes are not people and flowers and computers and books—the only thing that enters our eyes is light. An image is formed there and then it is transmitted, as tiny electrical impulses through the neurons in the optic nerves to certain centres in the brain. There is no flower, not even light or even an image, but tiny bursts of electricity which reach the brain. And somehow from that point, that little bit of electricity

is reconstituted back into the living, first person, subjective experience of a flower.

So far, nobody in the world will dispute it, even the most hardcore materialist reductionist will agree this is what is happening. This flower you experience is nothing but your mind, a *vrutti* in your mind. All of samsara, your most beloved person, the most annoying person you know, the best of experiences, the most miserable of experiences, all of them are in your mind. You may say they are outside and they are being represented in your mind—that is one kind of philosophical standpoint—but nobody will deny that whatever you are experiencing, you're experiencing in the mind.

So, what is the great secret that we can learn from this? Again, not our main subject here, but it is worthwhile learning this—the quality of

The Statue of Acharya Shankara at Kedarnath



our experience depends on the mind, not really on the world outside. Our natural reaction, our natural way of trying to make our lives better is to try to change the objective things outside. A wiser person tries to change the subjective—our whole perception of things and the way we understand and react to things inside the mind.

One of the most beautiful things I've heard comes from a monk in the Himalayas, who said in Hindi: '*Shant man mein bhala samsar kaun dekha hai?*'; whoever has seen samsara in a peaceful mind?

Normally we think just the opposite: my mind is restless because samsara makes me restless. The truth is I have samsara because my mind is restless; given the same external situation, a person with a peaceful mind will experience less suffering. Not that every problem will go away but the suffering will be much less. A good part of our suffering is the contribution of our own minds.

This is true as far as it goes, but this is not the teaching of Gaudapada. 'No mind' is not not-thinking. 'No mind' is not shutting down the mind. 'No mind' is not being inactive.

What is 'no mind' then? 'No mind' means managing the mind, spiritualising the mind. This is the central question of spiritual life. Whether you are a devotee, whether you are on the path of knowledge, or whether you are a meditator, whatever the philosophy, the practical matter comes down to handling the mind.

The yogi says, *vruttis* are the problem, so no *vruttis*, samadhi, is the solution. The devotee says the mind filled with worldliness is the problem, the mind given to God is the solution. What does Gaudapada say? 'When one realises, through Vedantic instruction, the truth of the absolute Reality of the Self, the mind entertains no *sankalpas*, resolves. Then the mind becomes no mind, in the absence of objects to be perceived it becomes a non-perceiver' (3,32).

When you realise yourself, the Atman, as existence-consciousness-bliss, as Brahman, then there will be no more desires in the mind. When the mind finds nothing out there, apart from the Self, to grasp, it becomes a non-grasping mind or no mind.

The Princess of Kashi

There is a nice little story which is quite relevant here. The story goes that there was a kingdom in ancient India, where in the court a play was staged. In the play, one of the roles was the role of a little girl, who was the princess of Kashi. They couldn't find a little girl to play the role so the queen said that the prince, who was a five-year-old boy at that time, could be dressed up as a little girl, and could play the role of the princess of Kashi. So, they dressed up the prince as a princess and the play was staged very successfully. At the queen's request, the court painter made a painting, a portrait of the little boy dressed as the princess of Kashi. Fifteen years passed, the prince grew up, doing all kinds of princely things. One day he was exploring the palace and he went into one of the old cellar rooms. He discovered this old painting, wiped the dust off it, and saw the princess of Kashi. Seeing the date of the painting, and thinking she must be the same age as he, he fell in love with her. He felt: 'This is the princess I want to marry and unless I marry her, I will never be happy!' Since he was shy, he couldn't tell his mother or his father though they all noticed something was amiss as he wasn't interested in anything anymore.

Finally, a wise old minister asked him: 'What ails you, Prince? You can confide in me.'

The prince said: 'I'm in love.'

'Very good. Who is she?'

'Oh, she's the princess of Kashi.'

'Good. A princess is perfect for you. Where did you meet her?'

'I haven't met her. I've seen her picture.'

'Well, where is the picture?'

'It's down there. I'll show you. It's an old picture. It was painted when she was five years old, as the date shows.'

They go down the cellar and see the painting together. And of course, the old minister remembers the origin of the painting.

The minister then says: 'Prince, that is not the princess of Kashi.'

'So, whoever she is, I'll marry her.'

'O Prince, many years ago, there was a play staged in the court and we found you to be the perfect one to play the princess of Kashi! The princess of Kashi is none other than you! *Tat tvam asi*, you are that!'

Now, what happens to the desire in the prince's mind? It disappears immediately. But why did it disappear? Because it could not be fulfilled? No! The princess of Kashi does not exist apart from him. He alone is the princess of Kashi and always has been. This idea of duality, something apart from him, which is desirable and which he wants—this led to the *sankalpa*, resolve, in the mind. And that *sankalpa*, that desire, 'I want this', it could be the other way around also, 'this is something bad and I want to avoid this'. 'I want to get this' is the form of *raga*, attachment; and 'I want to avoid this', is *dvesha*, aversion. And *raga-dvesha* is *samsara*.

Why did the *sankalpa* disappear? Because duality disappeared. 'There is no second person called princess of Kashi apart from me'. This is what the prince realised. Dvaita, the duality disappeared. And when the *sankalpa* goes, *raga-dvesha*, attraction-repulsion, also vanish; the Self alone remains. What is there in the Self to be gotten rid of, or what is there to be achieved? It's always there with me; I am always myself! It's a profound and delightful story and is related directly to our discussion of 'no mind'.

Note that the prince still has his eyes open. The yogi might have said: 'Don't look at the princess of Kashi, keep your eyes closed—if you don't think about it, it'll be alright.' The non-dualist says: 'Keep your eyes open, experience the world as it is, but be centred in the knowledge of the nondual Self. This entire world shining forth is your "princess of Kashi"! The good and the bad, all of it is you. Not as a body and mind—if you are a body everybody else is a body also; if you are a person, everybody else is a person also; if you are pure consciousness, then the entire world appears in you, the pure consciousness. Samsara disappears, Brahman alone is.'

The yogic approach seeks to free you by erasing the experience of the world. The non-dualist seeks freedom in the truth. It's like you're watching a film, a horror movie—you've forgotten it's a movie and you are scared. What's the way to overcome fear? The yogi will tell you to switch off the movie. Vedanta tells you to realise that it's a movie, there is nothing to fear. Then the



most horrifying movie also you will enjoy—it becomes art! You will recommend it for an Oscar award, the more convincingly horrifying, the more Oscar Awards you'll want it to get. By *atma-satya-anubodha*, the realisation of the truth of the absolute Reality of the Self, samsara goes away.

Advaita is not meant for wiping out our activities in this world. Advaita makes us limitless and free in our life. Right now, we are limited. I am different from you; this separation is a limit. My life is limited—I was born at such-and-such time; I'm going to die after some time. My capacities are limited—I am a tiny being in the vastness of time and space. What Advaita does is that it shows me that the entire vastness of time and space is nothing other than my Self. I am the infinite consciousness in which the entire universe appears. It teaches us to see God with open eyes. Kabir Das sings: '*Khule nayan dekhun saheb ko*; I shall see my beloved Lord with open eyes.' Not just in meditation but with open eyes.

Viveka, Discernment

So how do we do realise the truth about our Self? The answer Gaudapada gives is *viveka*, the intuitive insight born of philosophical discernment between the Self and the non-Self. Sri Ramakrishna would often tell to always discern between the eternal and non-eternal.

Consider our lives. Our day has these three experiences: the waking experience, the dream experience, and the deep sleep experience. What am I truly? Am I this person in the waking state? Am I the person in the dream? Or is it the blankness of deep sleep, knowing nothing, knowing neither myself nor the world—am I that being?

You are the one consciousness in which the waker and the waker's world appears, in which the dreamer and the dreamer's world appears, in which the deep sleeper and the deep sleeper's darkness, potential world, is experienced. You

are one consciousness; you are not the waker alone. Take the example of dreams. When we fall asleep, our mind constructs a world. It's only when we wake up from the dream, that moment of waking up—what is our understanding? 'Oh! It was a dream, all of it—all the people I saw, all the places I went to, all the time that past, all the events that happened, and most interestingly, even I myself in that dream—that body, that person in the dream, all of it was dreamt up by my mind.' I alone became the subject and the object, I alone became the good and the bad, I alone became the pleasant and unpleasant experiences, I alone became time and space in my dream. This is the natural *viveka* after awakening.

Exactly like that, in the waking state also, it is consciousness alone which appears—as I, the subject right now, and my world. That one consciousness is apart from the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper, and is called the *turiya*, the fourth. First is the waker, second is the dreamer, third is the deep sleeper, and fourth is the *turiya*—apart from the preceding three, but also underlying them, the ground of these three. This is '*atma anatma viveka*'; the discerning between Self and non-Self.

We have to note here, three implications. First, the one consciousness, *turiya*, is neither born nor dies. The body is born and the body dies. Things are created and destroyed. Things in the dream or in the waking world are non-eternal, temporary, subject to birth and death. That consciousness is not subject to birth and death. The Atman is *nitya*, eternal. The *anatma*, non-Self, is *anitya*, non-eternal.

Second, even in this world, right now, everything is changing, but that one consciousness is not changing. The body is changing. The body undergoes six-fold changes: '*Jayate*, it is born; '*asti*, it comes into existence; '*vardhate*, it grows; '*viparinamate*, it develops and matures;

apakshiyate, deteriorates; and finally *nashyati*, dies.' All of these changes are illumined by the same unchanging consciousness. In the deep sleep, no change is noted, but the deep sleep state itself changes into the waking and dreaming.

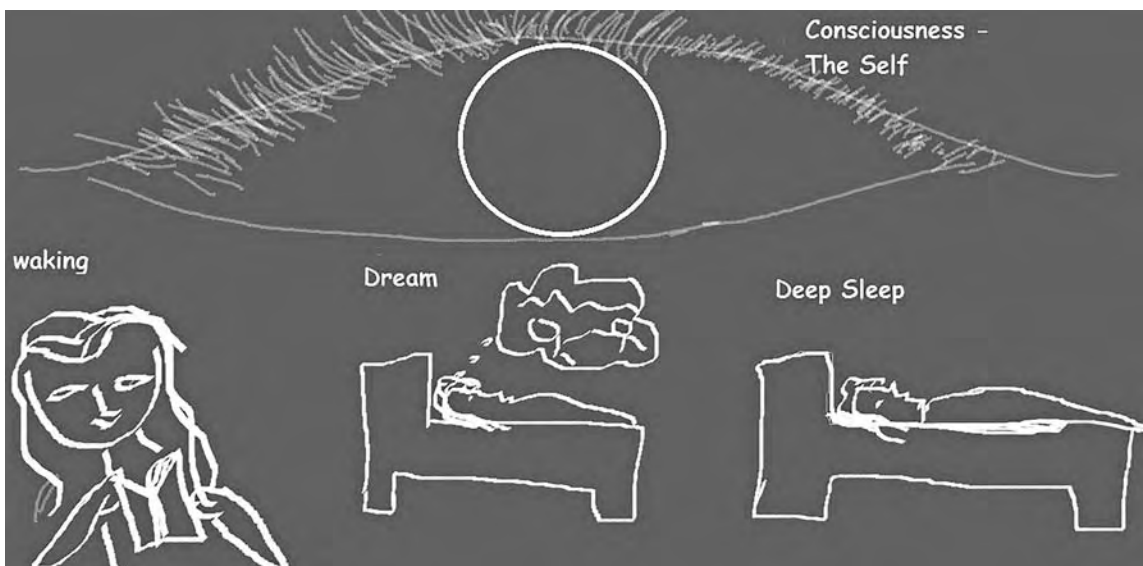
The third implication is very profound. The *turiya* and the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper—are they different? They're actually not different. You the person in your dream, and you the person who's dreaming—are the two of you different? No! You the dreamer, when you are sleeping in your bed and dreaming, you yourself appear as the person in your dream. That person in the dream is not different from you. You are there when the dream is going on, because you are dreaming it, and you will be there when the dream ends, when you wake up, but that person in the dream cannot exist without you. When you do not dream that person, who you dreamt you were, is not there anymore. The point is *atma satyam*, the reality of the Self and *anatma mithya*, the unreality of the non-Self. This is a very profound point—you the pure consciousness are the reality and the waker, dreamer, deep sleeper are the appearances. Just as the person in your

dream is your appearance in the dream, like a role an actor plays on stage, so all of this—the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper and the waker's world, dreamer's world, and the deep-sleep darkness, are all appearances in you, the one consciousness.

Acharya Shankara, in his invocatory verses in his commentary on the *Mandukya Karika*, uses a very evocative phrase: '*Maya-sankhya-turiyam*; designated in the terms of *maya* as *turiya*.' The real Atman, is called the fourth, *turiya*, only when you count it through *maya*. Only with respect to the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper, the real Self is the fourth, but really speaking, the Self is only one. Those three are your appearances—the Self alone is real; the non-Self is but an appearance.

Putting it all together, *viveka* gives us this result: the Self is eternal, unchanging, and real while the non-Self is perishable, changing, and false.

Note that you cannot count the false with the real. If you eat a cookie and go to sleep and dream of eating three cookies, have you then eaten a total of four cookies? No, because the dream cookies cannot be counted with the real cookie eaten in the waking state. You cannot count the false waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper,



and their respective worlds, along with *turiya*, the real. So, *turiya* becomes one without a second. Without a second means 'not-two', that is, Advaita. So, 'no mind' means the realisation of the nondual nature of the Self.

This 'no mind' does not ask you to sit in meditation, but does not exclude meditation either. In fact, if one concentrates deeply upon the Self, the mind will go into samadhi. So, samadhi is not excluded from Gaudapada's concept of 'no mind'. And non-dualists have no objection to samadhi, in fact, deep meditation is highly valued. In the biographies of great non-dualists like Tota Puri, Ramana Maharshi, or indeed Sri Ramakrishna himself, we see how they would be sometimes absorbed in samadhi.


Whether with eyes open or with eyes closed, the same reality is always there. Gaudapada gave this teaching the beautiful name, *asparsha* yoga, the way of no contact.

Why is it the way of no contact? Because Brahman and the world never come in contact. The real and the false are not enemies. What is an enemy of falsity? The knowledge of reality. The false snake and the real rope are not enemies; they are not contradictory. It is because of the real rope that we can mistakenly see it as a snake. And the false snake never actually comes in contact with the real rope. The desert is not an enemy of the mirage water; it is because of the desert that we have the illusion of a mirage water. What contradicts the water in the mirage? What contradicts the false snake? Our knowledge that it's a rope; our knowledge that it's a mirage, that it's not really water. Knowledge of reality is the enemy of falsity, but reality as such is not the enemy of falsity.

Take the example of a clay pot. Does the clay ever come in contact with the pot? The clay never comes in contact with anything called pot. The pot is name, form, and usage—*nama*, *rupa*, and *vyavahara*—a construct. There is no

real thing called pot with which the clay will come in contact. So, the clay is *asparsha*, it has no contact with the pot. Similarly, the prince can have no contact with the princess of Kashi, for there is no second entity called the princess of Kashi apart from the prince himself. The Self is *asparsha*, it has no contact with this appearance of the world. So, Gaudapada has this beautiful verse, with a slightly mischievous tone at the end, where he gently pokes fun at certain yogis: 'This yoga of no-contact is difficult for the yogis to comprehend. These yogis apprehend fear in the fearless, and are afraid of it' (3.39).

Once you realise this world as Brahman, you are fearless. Sri Ramakrishna sings a song of Ramprasad, who 'looks upon this world as a "framework of illusion". Again, after the attainment of Knowledge, the vision of God, this very world becomes to him a "mansion of mirth"'.⁶ What is the 'mansion of mirth'? This world itself, after enlightenment, after the self is realised as Brahman, which is bliss itself.

When non-duality of the Self is realised, you have achieved 'no mind'. That 'no mind' is permanent. It's not dependent on any kind of practice as it is identical with Brahman Itself. This is *asparsha* yoga. 

References

1. See Acharya Shankara, Commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad* and *Mandukya Karika*, Introduction: '*Vedanta-artha-sara-sangraha-bhutam-idam prakarana-chatushtayam*'.
2. See Gaudapada, *Mandukya Karika*, 3.39, 4.2.
3. See Acharya Shankara, Commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad* and *Mandukya Karika*, Introduction: '*Duhkha-atmakasya-atmano dvaita-prapancha-upashame svasthata*'.
4. '*Rogartasyaiva roga-nivritttau svasthata*'.
5. *Mandukya Karika*, 3.31.
6. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 310.



Yoga Philosophy According to Eminent Personalities of Maharashtra

Swami Bhitiharananda

THE HUMAN MIND is very inquisitive and wants to know things related to life. Many questions occupy the mind right from eternity about the life like the mystery of life and

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death, about sufferings, about liberation from the sufferings, about God, and so on. Indian philosophical systems satisfy an enquirer by answering these questions and show different paths to enlightenment, giving a great hope of freedom from bondage. The aim of Indian schools of thought is to liberate human beings.

Upanishads, which form the end part of the Vedas, mainly deal with the *paramatma*, the supreme Self, attaining which one becomes liberated from the bondages of life. Taking this basic concept of eternal liberation, many enlightened souls have established different schools of thought based on their perceptions and realisations of the ultimate Reality. Almost all of them deal with some common concepts such as *ishvara*, creator God; *jivatma*, the individual self; Prakriti, nature; freedom and its methods, rebirth, and so on, in their own style of exposition, and thus form different schools of thought. And it's pertaining to these different expositions that the Indian philosophical system has been divided into two major groups, namely, *astika*, orthodox—believers of the Vedas; and *nastika*, heterodox—nonbelievers of the Vedas. Charvaka, Jainism, and Buddhism are heterodox philosophies, and Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva-mimamsa, and Vedanta are orthodox philosophies.

The present deliberation is about the yoga philosophy in a broader sense, specifically with reference to the *Yoga Sutra*, which was written by the great sage of ancient times, Maharishi Patanjali, and how it was practised as well as disseminated by the spiritual personalities in the Maharashtra region of India. The great philosopher Jadunath Sinha says:

The special feature of this system is comprehensive treatment of the art of yoga, which is assumed to be one of the methods of achieving mokṣa by all other systems. The eight-fold yoga consists in discipline of the body, regulation of life-forces, and concentration of mind. It aims at absolute control over the psychophysical organism. It seeks to uproot the unconscious individual and racial dispositions (*saṃskāra*) of false knowledge (*avidyā*) which is the cause of bondage. It is a means to the intuitive realization of the self as an eternally pure and free spirit. The practice of yoga liberates occult powers of

the mind, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, thought-transference and the like, which are considered to be impediments to the realization of mokṣa when they are consciously pursued and utilized for worldly powers.¹

Spiritual life is a wonderful blend of science of mind and devotion to God. And this blending has given birth to many saints and realised souls in Maharashtra, most of whom started their spiritual journey with devotion to God in an image, which appealed to their souls and ultimately ended in realising the principle behind and beyond the image. A scholar says:

The Pātañjala-Yoga claims to be a way of liberation and bliss. It will be the height of presumption to say that it is not. But in view of the various points of difference between it and the Yoga of Devotion, and in view of certain peculiar characteristics of the latter which are absent from the former, we are tempted to say with the author of Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad and with that of the Bhagavadgītā that the only way to know and to reach God is through an exclusive, faithful and unceasing devotion to God. If it be said that the Pātañjala-Yoga too speaks of God and of devotion to God, we have to say that it makes such reference in one of its Sūtras by employing the particle 'Vā' meaning 'or', definitely suggesting thereby that devotion to God is a co-ordinate means of attaining Samādhi (Pā. 1.23). On two more occasions there is a reference to the devotion to God as a sub-variety of one of the eight Aṅgas of Yoga (Pā. 2.1, 32). So the Pātañjala-Yoga-Darśana is not itself clear whether Bhakti-Yoga is subordinate to or co-ordinate with the Yoga of Patanjali. Ignoring this defect of inconsistency, and taking for granted that Bhakti-Yoga is treated as if on a par with the Pātañjala-Yoga, we have to raise the question whether a devotionless Yoga can lead us to liberation and to God. The mere Yogin without the love of God will often turn into a stoic, and feel that he is liberated; the devotee too will feel that he is liberated, but liberated on account of

the grace of God; and though capable of presenting the sterner qualities of the mind, he will necessarily be full of compassion for others.²

A spiritual aspirant longs to achieve the oneness with consciousness by mentally rejecting the perceptible and sensuous world, spends every moment in the thought of God, which itself becomes a sort of meditation and finally when the mind becomes absolutely pure, the Consciousness itself shines in it with all its glory. But even though the spiritual journey ends for the aspirant, there arises in the heart of such a great soul, compassion for the people suffering due to their attachment to the world and such a person engages in the task of helping in liberating others and due to this one attains sainthood. India takes pride in giving birth to innumerable such great souls from time to time, who were not satisfied only in their own liberation but joyfully shared their hardships and spiritual experiences, without any kind of reservations, so as to encourage the degenerating humanity to take up the path of spirituality, which is supposed to be the ultimate aim of human life. The purpose of this article is to understand few selected teachings and make our lives blessed, much like standing on the bank of the holy river and sprinkling a few drops on ourselves.

Human birth, lifespan, and the pleasurable and painful experiences are the outcome of one's own virtue and vice according to the *Yoga Sutra*.³ Swami Vivekananda reiterates the same fact: "Who sows must reap", they say, "and cause must bring / The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad."⁴ And the same fact was realised by one of the prominent saints of Maharashtra, Eknath (1533–99), who while explaining through an example of a seed, says: '*Megha varṣe nirmala jāla, parī jaisen bīja taisen phala, taise bhakta abhakta donhī, vegalīka vegalepanīn, ekā janārdanī guṇa, chāṇḍana velū nohe samāna*'; a cloud showers pure water but as is the seed so will be the fruit;

like there is a difference between a devotee and a nonbeliever [the difference is due to their past tendencies, good or bad], Janardan's disciple Eknath says that a piece of bamboo and that of a sandalwood are not the same.⁵

That performing actions or duties without thinking of the results is one of the most effective and definite ways to realise God, is the chief message of the Bhagavadgita. Eknath says:

Jyāsi karaṇen citta-suddhi, karmen ācarāvīn ādhīn, tarī ca hoy manaḥsuddhi, sahaja tuṭatī ādhi-vyādhi cittācī sthīratā, hoy upāsanen tattvatam, citta jhālīyā niṣcala, sahaja rahīla taḥamāla, ekā janārdanī mana, hoy brahma-rūpa jāna; one who wants to make the mind pure should first perform the necessary actions and the primal ignorance will be destroyed; by spiritual practice the mind becomes steady and the steady mind easily becomes thirsty [for God] and Janardan's disciple Eknath says that this is the stage when the mind becomes one with Brahman (53; *abhang*, 12).

Nitya-naimittika karmen ācarāvīn, tihīn te pāvāvi citta-suddhi, citta sthīra vāyā karī upāsanā, bhaje nārāyaṇa ekā bhāve, viveka-vairagya-prāpti tatprasaden, cittā lāge vedha sadgurūcā, sadguru-kṛpenen pūrṇa bodha hoy, nitya tyāce pāy hṛdayīn dharīn, ekā janārdanī thevūniyā mana, manācen unmana pāvalāse; one should become purified by performing regular [*nitya*] and special [*naimittika*] duties. Practise spiritual disciplines and remember God with one-pointed devotion to make the mind steady. As a result of these practices and by the grace of God, one achieves discernment and renunciation. Then the mind hankers for getting an ideal guru. By the grace of an ideal guru, one gets the true knowledge of Brahman. Constantly meditate on the guru's holy feet in your heart. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that by keeping one's mind constantly on God, the mind gets uplifted (54; *abhang* 13).

Ahimsa or nonviolence is one of the teachings of the *Yoga Sutra*,⁶ as the Self is One and

omnipresent, so causing inconvenience to others is creating trouble to oneself, due to which one goes farther from consciousness. This is the message Eknath conveys: ‘*Śruti sāṅgati paramārthā, hīnsā na karāvī sarvathā, saṅkalpa nāśī to saṅnyāsī, tetheṇ kalpana kāyasī, veda bole sarvāṇi tḥāyīṇi, ekā vāñcuni dujeṇi nāhīṇi, ekā janārdanī bodhu, nāhīṇi taṇva na kaḷe vedu*; one should not resort to violence, if one is desirous of knowing the supreme Self, so say the Vedas. That person is a sannyasi, who has destroyed all the resolves and future plans. Then, what is the use of planning? The Vedas say that God is indwelling in all; there is only one, no other. Janardan’s disciple Eknath says that let us understand that we cannot understand God through the Vedas.’⁷

Stressing upon the importance of a mind free from all the perceptible objects, Eknath says:

Viṣayāce abhilāṣe sabalābheda bhāse, viṣaya-lesha tetheṇi mukti keṇi vāse, viṣaya-trṣṇā sāñḍīṇi maga tūṇi śādhana māñḍīṇi, vairāgyaci goḍi gurūsi puseṇi, strī-puruṣa-bhāvanā bheda

Eknath



bhāse manā, tetheṇi brahma-jñānā gamana kaiceṇi, kaṇu-bharita jo dolā śarīrāsi de duḥkha, anumātra viṣaya to sansāra-dāyaka, ekā janārdanī nija-jñāna śakti, nirviṣaya mana te abheda bhakti; due to the desire for the sense objects, one perceives all difference. How can there be liberation where even an iota of any sense object is present? First, give up all worldly desires and then, begin doing spiritual practices, and know about the sweetness of renunciation from your guru. How can one go towards the knowledge of Brahman, when there is the idea of male and female? When even a small speck of dust enters the eyes, it gives great pain to the body; similarly, even a small amount of sense enjoyments produces the bondage of sam-sara. Janardan’s disciple Eknath says that by the power of true knowledge, the mind becomes free from the sense objects, which is the same as devotion beyond all differences (61; *abhang* 43).

Detachment is one of the ways to attain the tranquillity of mind according to *Yoga Sutra*⁸ and Eknath enlightens us like this: ‘*Pakṣi aṅgaṇīṇi utaratī, te kāṇi guṇitoni rābatī, taisēṇi asāveṇi saṁsārī, joṇvarī prācīnācī dorī, vastikara vastī ālā, prātaḥkāḷīṇi uṭhoni gelā, śaraṇa ekā janārdana, aiseṇi asatāṇi bhaya kavaṇa*; birds descend in the courtyard, do they get entangled? So, one should be detached in the world as long as the effects of previous actions remain. A guest stays in a shelter but leaves the next morning. Janardan’s disciple Eknath says that if one surrenders only to God, then what is the need for fear?’⁹

And to attain moksha or liberation:

Mamatā tḥevuni gharīṇi dārīṇi, vāyāṇi kāṇi jāsi bāherī, ādhīṇi mamatva sāñḍāveṇi, pāṭhīṇi abhimānā khañḍāveṇi, mamatā sāñḍī vādeṇi kodeṇi, mokṣa-sukha sahañjīṇi ghaḍe,

ekā janārdanī śaraṇa, mamatā tākin nirdālūna; constantly identifying with one's hearth and home, why do you move hither and thither in vain? First drop the attachments of 'I' and 'mine', and then destroy your ego. Once, attachments to hearth and home are destroyed, then one easily attains the joy of moksha. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that only surrendering to God uproots all attachments (64; *abhang* 54).

Moha mamatā hi samūla naśāvī, tevhañ ci pāvāvī citta-śuddhi, citta-śuddhi jhāliya guru-carana-sevā, teñen jñāna-ṭhevā prāpta hoyā, ekā janārdanī prāpta jhāliya jñāna, brahma paripūrṇa anubhavela; delusion and attachment is to be completely uprooted, and then one can attain purity of the mind. With a pure mind one should serve one's guru, by that one gets the treasure of knowledge. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that obtaining this knowledge, one experiences absolute Brahman (64; *abhang* 55).

According to the *Yoga Sutra*: 'When the yogi remains firmly established in discrimination and goes beyond all the dualities then he experiences samadhi.'¹⁰ Eknath very wonderfully describes this state of a yogi:

Mukhīn nāhīn nindā-stuti, sādhu varte ātmasthiti, rāga-dveṣa samūla gele, dvaitādvaita hārapale, gheñen deñen hā pasārā, nāhīn jayāsī dusarā, ekā janārdanī santa, jyāce hṛdayīn bhagavanita; a sadhu established in the Self does not praise or blame because attachment and hatred have been completely uprooted from the mind and one has gone beyond Dvaita and Advaita. One has no worldly dealings of giving and receiving. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that such a person is a saint, in whose heart God dwells.¹¹

Sri Krishna describes in the Gita: 'I have, O son of Pritha, no duty, nothing that I have not gained; and nothing that I have to gain, in the three worlds, yet, I continue in action.'¹² Eknath says: '*Dehī asonī videhī, cāle bole sadā pāhī, ase akhañḍa samādhi, nase kañhīn ādhi-vyādhi, upādhiñce toḍonī lāg, dehīn dehapanēn bharlēn jag,*

ekā janārdanī sañga, sadā samādhāna sarvāñga; though the yogi lives in the body, but is beyond the body [because of detachment], and constantly moves, talks, and sees. The yogi always experiences unbroken samadhi and there are no effects of actions. By breaking the ties of limiting adjuncts of attachments, the yogi sees the whole universe to be filled with God. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that the company of such a person constantly gives all-round fulfilment' (88, *abhang* 149).

Eknath describes the experience of *savikalpa* samadhi, similar to the *samprajnata* samadhi mentioned in the *Yoga Sutra*:¹³ 'I can see God full of bliss, one without a second, eternal, and free from disease. I feel attracted towards God by my body, mind, and speech; thus I got to know God.'¹⁴ Also:

Ānanda advaya nitya nirāmaya, sāñvaḷa bhāsatahe maja lāgīn, vedhu tayācā māñhiyā jīvā, kāy vācā manobhāvā lāgalāse, vedhaleñse mana jhāleñ unmana, dekhatañ carana goḍa vāte, pāhatāñ pāvatañ pāruṣalā jīva, ekā janārdanī deva kaḷonī ālā; the black one [Vitthala] appears to me as bliss, nondual, eternal, and without blemishes. I am attracted to him by body, speech, and mind, and because of this attraction, my mind got uplifted. I experience the sweetness of his feet. Seeing and attaining God, the soul became one with God. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that I understood God.

Avagheñ ci trailokya ānandacen ātañ, caranīn jagannāthā citta ṭheleñ, māy jagannātha bāpa jagannātha, anāthanācā nātha janārdana, ekā janārdanī ekapanēn ubhā, caitanyācī śobhā śobhalāse; all the three worlds have been filled with bliss and my mind has been firmly kept at the feet of the master of the universe. My mother, the Lord of the universe; my father, the Lord of the universe; and the master of orphans, the saviour of people [God]. Janardan's disciple Eknath says that God alone dwells in my guru, thus glorifying the glory of Consciousness' (105; *abhang* 204).

Another saint contemporary to Eknath was Tukaram (c. 1608–50), who is one of the popular saints even today, on account of his immense devotion to the Lord. He has expressed his spiritual feelings as well as experiences through his innumerable poems, which are believed to be composed by none other than the Lord, making Tukaram an instrument. Tukaram describes his experience of the Absolute, much like the state of *kaivalya* mentioned in the *Yoga Sutra*:¹⁵ ‘*Lavaṇ melāvitāṇi jaleṇi, kāy urlēṇi teṇi nirāleṇi; Taisā samarasa jhāloṇi, tuja māji hārapaloṇi; Agni-karpūrācyā meliṇi, kāy urlēi kājaḷi; Tukā mhane hoti, tujhi māji yeka joti*; As salt gets dissolved in water and loses its separate identity, similarly [O, God], I became one with you and lost myself in you. As when fire meets camphor, only soot is left behind; Tukaram says, you and I became one flame.’¹⁶

Control of the mind coupled with the self-surrender to God, *ishvara-pranidhana*,¹⁷ is the

Tukaram



key to liberation from the bondage of the mundane world. Bringing the unruly senses under control is a major task for the spiritual aspirant. Tukaram makes us aware of this fact:

*Nāhīṇi devāpāsīṇi mokṣāceṇi gāṇtholeṇi, Aāṇonī niraleṇi dyāveṇi hātīṇi; Indriyāṇicā jaya sādhoṇiyāṇi mana, nirviṣaya kāraṇa ase tetheṇi; Upāsa pāraṇiṇi akṣarāṇicī ātī, satkarmā śevatiṇi aseṇi phala; Adareṇi saṅkalpa vārī atisaya, sahaja teṇi kāya duḥkha jāṇe; Svapnāṇicīye ghāye vivalasī vāyāṇi, raḍe raḍatiyāsaveri mithyā; Tukā mhane phala āhe mulāpāsīṇi, śaraṇadevāsī jāya vegiṇi; God does not have a bundle of moksha that can be simply handed over. What is needed is the control of the senses and the mind, making them free from all the sense objects. Fasting, utterances of prayer, and the like, are merely rows of letters; ultimately it is virtuous acts that produce the desired results. ... You are unnecessarily crying for the pains you received in a dream. You are falsely crying with the others who cry. Tukaram says that the fruit is at the root and so speedily surrender to the Lord.*¹⁸

Once, Tukaram was sitting alone in a lonely place immersed in observing nature—trees, creepers, and birds—and he was so absorbed in the glory of nature that he hardly realised when his mind went into a trance. This is the same state of mind as described in the *Yoga Sutra*, wherein it is said that the mind can be concentrated with the help of many methods, one of which was observing a natural pleasant scenery.¹⁹ Tukaram spontaneously composed a poem describing that state of his mind:

Vṛkṣavallī āmhāṇi soyaṛiṇi vanacareṇi, pakṣiḥi susvareṇi ālavitī; Yeṇeṇi sukheṇi ruce yekāntācā vāsa, nāhīṇi guṇa doṣa aṅgā yeta; Ākāśa maṇḍapa pṛthvī āsana, rame tetheṇi mana kriḍā karūṇi; Kaṇṭhākamaṇḍalū deha upacārā, jānavito vārā avasarū; Harikathā bhojana paravaḍi vistāra, karūṇi prakāra seṇi ruci; Tukā mhane hoya manāsī saṁvāda, āpulācī vāda āpaṇāṇisī; trees,

creepers, animals are the most near and dear ones, birds also sing beautifully. That is the reason I enjoy solitude, no virtues and vices crop up in the mind. Sky is the roof, earth is the seat, being absorbed in that, my mind plays joyfully. For the body, there are rags and the water-pot. I can feel the wind now and then. Food in the form of spiritual discourses is spread all over; we can make and relish tasty dishes out of this. Tukaram says that you discuss with yourself through a conversation with the mind.²⁰

All the saints take a spiritual aspirant to the ultimate end through devotional path which is *ishvara-pranidhana* as stated by Patanjali and in the poems of Tukaram, more of this surrender is observed. In the following poem of his, we find a reflection of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings proving the greatness of a devotee's heart where he, a devotee, meditates on the complete form of the Lord, referring to the story of Lord Vishnu who covered the entire universe in three steps:

*Manavācātita tujheñ heñ svarūpa, mhañoniyāñ māpa bhakti kelen; Bhaktīciye māpeñ mojitoñ anantā, itarāneñ tattvatañ na mojave; Yoga yāga tapeñ dehāciye yogen, jñānāciye lāge na sāñpadaśi; Tuka mhañe āmhī bholyā bhāveñ sevā, ghyāvi jī keśavā karitoñ aisi; O Keshava [Vitthala], your nature is beyond thought and speech, that is the reason I made devotion a measure to measure you. I measure the immeasurable with devotion, but none can measure you with the measure of philosophy. Yogic practices, Vedic rituals, and austerities are related to the body; and you cannot be grasped by the intellect. Tukaram says that we are serving you with our innocent minds, please accept it (241; *abhang* 1227).*

Yoga is basically control of the mind and everything is nothing but the mind, as the *Amritabindu Upanishad* also puts it 'mind only is responsible for the bondage and liberation of human beings'.²¹ Tukaram has realised this and he voices that 'the mind is everything' through his poem:

Mana karā re prasanna, sarvasiddhiceñ kāraṇa, mokṣa athavā bandhana, sukha samādhāna icchā te; Manen pratimā sthāpilī, manen manā pūjākelī, manen icchā puravilī, mana māulī sakalāñci; Mana guru āñi śiṣya, karī āpuleñci dāsya, prasanna āpa-āpanāsa, gatī athavā adhogaṭī; Sādhaka vācaka pañḍita, śrote vakte aikā mātā, nāhiñ nāhiñ anya daivata, tukā mhañe dusareñ; make the mind happy because that is the cause of all occult powers, bondage or liberation, joy, contentment, desire, and the like. The mind installs God's image, the mind worships the mind, the mind fulfils desire, the mind is the mother of all. The mind is the master and disciple, becomes slave of its own, makes itself happy, makes itself progress or regress. Hear, O spiritual aspirants, students, scholars, speakers, listeners, Tukaram says that there is no other God other than the mind.²²

Through the following poem, Tukaram even advices about the duties of a yogi or a spiritual aspirant and glorifies the importance of detachment by which one can attain the supreme knowledge:

Joḍoniyāñ dhana uttama vyavahāreñ, udāsa vicāreñ veñca karī; Uttamaci gatī to yeka pāvela, uttama bhogila jīvakhāñi; Para-upakāra neñen paranindā, parastriyā sadā bahiñi mātā; Bhūṭadayā gāi paśūñceñ pālāṇa, tāñheliyā jivana vanāmāji; Sāñtirūpa navhe koñcā vāñṭa; vādhavi mahattva vadilañceñ; Tukā mhañe herici āśramāceñ phala, paramapada baḷa vairāgyāceñ; by adopting noble means one should earn wealth, but be detached while storing it. Thus, one will attain the best end and would have best enjoyments while living. Help others but don't criticise, [other than your wife] always regard all women as sisters and mothers. Show compassion to living beings, and maintain cows and animals, and serve water to the thirsty in the forest [in the places not having water]. [One should be] peaceful and should not harm anyone, also [one should] intensify one's father's glory. Tukaram says that by living the householder's life in this manner, one

attains the highest state due to the power of detachment (382; *abhang* 2091).

The *Yoga Sutra* prescribes 'compassion to the miserable' as a means to purify the mind, due to which an aspirant forgets one's own self and feels for others.²³ And the foremost quality of saints is their compassion for others. During Tukaram's lifetime, India was invaded by many, including the Mughals and the torture that the common people underwent was unimaginable. For Tukaram, this pitiful sight was unbearable, which he expressed through a prayer full of feeling for the suffering:

Na dekhave ḍolaṇi aisā hā ākāṇṭa, parapīḍe citta duḥkhī hoten; Kāy tumhī yethen nasālasen jhālen, āmbhī na dekhilen pahije hen; Paracakra koṭhen haridāsānce vāse, na dekhijeta

Samarth Ramdas



dešen rāhātīyā; Tukā mhaṇe mājhi lājavilī sevā, hīnapaṇen deva jīnen jhālen; I can't bear the sight of these people crying in torment. I feel pained seeing others suffer. [O Lord], what makes you to be not here? [Because of which, we have to see this torture] which we are not supposed to see. How have these terrible enemies come into the homes of devotees? It is unbearable to see them moving about in our place. Tukaram says, O Lord, my service to you has become fruitless, which has made living quite useless.²⁴

Discriminating the real from the unreal is the first and foremost prerequisite of any spiritual practice, and Samarth Ramdas (1608–81), very strongly recommends it to the aspirants through his treatises. Saints are established in the Truth, so while studying their lives and teachings we can appreciate the perfect synchrony between their action and words. Probably that is the reason why even after centuries of their passing, their teachings reinvigorate our minds, much like the freshness one gets after having a dip in a river that flows for thousands of years. Samarth Ramdas too was no exception, he practised discrimination from a young age, keeping the sole aim of his life to be realising God. Though his life was full of incidents, which were testimony to this fact, his running away from his marriage ceremony, at the young age of eleven, as was the custom those days, would suffice for us to understand his love for the Truth and his tremendous power of discrimination. And the same power alerts the readers through his words, when he conveys wisdom through a conversation between the master and a disciple:

Are tūni koṇa koṇacā, koṭhūn ālāsī kaincā, aisā vicāra pūrvicā, gheī bāpā; my dear, reflect thus, who are you and whom do you belong to? Whence and how have you come?

The meaning of these questions and the implied answers can be as follows:

Question: My dear, who are you?

Answer: I am the formless being, but with attributes.

Question: Whom do you belong to?

Answer: Though I am without birth, due to my forgetfulness, I am stuck with the delusive love of many parents.

Question: From where have you come?

Answer: On account of past impressions and desires, I have come again to this place.

Question: How did you come here?

Answer: While traveling through many wombs, I have been born again and again.²⁵

In the next couplet Samarth Ramdas makes his readers aware that their repeated cycles of births and deaths is due to unfulfilled desires and the mind engrossed in worldly objects. This is one more method to discriminate: '*Yethen tujheni kānhica nāhin, bhulalā āhesa kāi, cukonī ālāsi jāi, jethicā tethen*'; nothing belongs to you here. You have forgotten something and have arrived here by mistake. So, go whence you have come' (45; verse 27). This couplet indicates that we have nothing to do with this world as in the absolute sense it is not Real. Our real nature is Atman, which is Truth-knowledge-bliss absolute, and that is the place where we are constantly struggling to reach taking a long route, due to wrong means on account of spending our lives trying to fulfil false desires.

The concept of *kaivalya* in the *Yoga Sutra*²⁶ has been quite subtly and wonderfully elucidated by Samarth Ramdas in the following couplet: '*To mī ātmā aisā hetu, hen nāśivanta tākī tūn, unmani avashthecā prantu, ten svarūpa tujheni*'; the knowledge of "I am that Atman" [in the plane of ignorance] is also ephemeral. Give it up and go to the transcendental realm, which is your true

nature.²⁷ All the scriptures firmly establish the fact that 'Brahman alone is Truth' and 'You are That', meaning that every living being is Brahman. But as long as 'I am Brahman' is related to the gross or subtle body, that is not the ultimate end as there still lies the difference of the triad of the knower, the known, and the knowledge. Hence, when the mind transcends these three differences and attains perfect unity with Consciousness, that state is the real nature of a living being. Sri Ramakrishna's allegory of a salt doll jumping into the ocean to measure its depth, but instead itself getting merged in the ocean, would help us to comprehend the deep import of Samarth Ramdas's statement.²⁸

And what is our real nature: '*Svarūpa nirmala āni nighonīta, svarūpa sevaṭacā sevata, jikḍe pahāven tikḍe nīta, sanmukhaci āhe*'; one's real nature is uncontaminated and unwavering. That real nature is the end of all ends, on account of which a yogi experiences Self everywhere.²⁹

And because our real nature is unattached and unchangeable, it is described thus: '*Jeni hale nā cāle, jeni bole nā ḍole, āvagen āpanaci sanicalen, yekalen yekataci ten*'; stable, unmoved, doesn't speak and that alone has filled itself' (114; verse 11).

According to the *Yoga Sutra*, ignorance makes one think impermanent objects to be permanent and makes one to relate everything to the impermanent body.³⁰ That is why Samarth Ramdas says: "*Ahambrahmāsmi*" *hā gāthā, ālā dehabuddhiciyā mātāhā, dehabuddhīneni paramārthā, kānakoṇḍe hoije*; saying "*aham brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman" while having body consciousness, begets ego and increases body consciousness. Such a spiritual practice becomes shameful.³¹ This is so because while saying 'I am Brahman', a person who has not realised Brahman, identifies either with the gross body, or with the subtle body, or with the causal body.

Another prominent saint, Janabai (d. 1350), was born in the thirteenth century in Maharashtra. She worked as a maid in the house of a great devotee of Vitthala, Namdev. Spiritual life starts with the devotional practices but culminates in realising oneness with the Lord, which is also called Advaita. This is the general structure of the life of almost all saints. Similar is the story of Janabai, who prayed to Lord Panduranga every moment with such earnestness that God came in human form, helped in her daily chores, and ran errands. While engaged in various kinds of works she used to sing her own

Namdev



spontaneous compositions, which later became spiritual guidelines for the entire humanity. Though academically unlettered, in her poems the wisdom of yoga can be found, which were her own experiences.

As her devotion ripened, Janabai started experiencing God everywhere and in everything, and her life was full of the bliss of God. This state can be compared with *samprajnata* samadhi.³² It is described in her poem: '*Deva khāte deva pite, devāvarī mī nijateri; Deva dete deva ghete, devāsaveni vyavahāriteni; Deva yethen deva tethen, devāvinen nāhī riteni; Janī mhaṇe viṭhābāi, bharuni uralen āntarbāhī*; I eat God, I drink God, I sleep on God. I give God, I take God. I deal with God. God is here, God is there; there is no place without God. Janabai says that Vitthala is filled up within and without.'³³ This is her spiritual journey from *saguna* God, God with attributes, to *nirguna* God, God without attributes.

Through her following poem, it is seen that Janabai is experiencing the God principle in the image of God. Realising the fact that God is omnipresent, she doesn't want to confine God only in an image and therefore her spiritual transformation can be perceived thus:

Joḍa jāli re śivāśī, bhrānta phīṭālī re jivācī; Ānandacī ānanda jāhalā, ānanda bodhaci bodhalā; Ānandācī laharī uṭhī, brahmānandeni gīlīlā potīn; Ekapaṇa jethen pāhīn, tethen vijñāpti uralī nāhīn; Aisī sadgurucī karaṇī, dāśī janī viṭhthalacaranīn; by joining with the supreme Self, the delusion of this individual soul has vanished. Bliss became bliss and became aware of the bliss. The wave of [an ordinary] bliss has been swallowed by the bliss of Brahman. Where there is oneness, no modifications exist there. This is the work of an ideal guru. Janabai is a servant at the feet of Vitthala (43; *abhang* 323).

Here, the expression is that once a sadhaka becomes aware of one's true nature, then the

delusion comes to an end and one becomes free from the cycles of repeated births and deaths.

Words fail to express the true knowledge and many times create delusion, as Acharya Shankara says: 'The mesh of words is like a big forest that makes one to wander directionless.'³⁴ That is the reason why the knowledge of Brahman cannot be expressed appropriately through words. This is the idea Janabai expresses through her following poem:

Śabdāñce brahma laukika ho dise, jaise te phāñse mañdāce; Jñānī to koṇa vijñānī to koṇa, dohīncā āpaṇa sāksabhūta; Svayen sukhen dhālā āpaṇāten visaralā, to yogi rāhilā nāhi yethen; Nāmayaci janī sagarīn mīlālī, paratoni muḷīn kevi jāya?; the truth expressed through words remain on the perceptible or gross world only, and so words are delusive. They bring trouble just like the game of dice. Who can decide who is a *jnani* and who is a *vijnani*. For both, only the Self is the witness. And the one who experiences true knowledge becomes content with the bliss of the knowledge of the Self, then the yogi does not remain here [in the world]. Similarly, Namdev's Janabai has also merged in the ocean [of Consciousness], how can she return?³⁵

One can attain *kaivalya* by developing detachment towards the occult powers, which keep the mind always on the plane of the body level.³⁶ By using the analogy of a mango, Janabai advises spiritual aspirants to give up body consciousness:

Śarīra he jāyācen naśvara āṇikāñce, mhañāla jarī tyācen kāy kāj; Āmbarasen cōkhilā bijsāle sāñdīlā, pudhen teṇen ubhaviḷā dujā ekū; Samūḷa sāla māyā sāñduniyā dije, vari aham bīja jatana karā; Te bīja bhājoni karā ovāḷaṇī, santāñce caraṇīn samūḷa deha; the body is destructible and will not last forever. What is the use of this body? After sucking the mango, the seed and skin are thrown. It sprouts and grows into another mango tree. Give up the maya in the form of the skin and keep the seed of 'I'

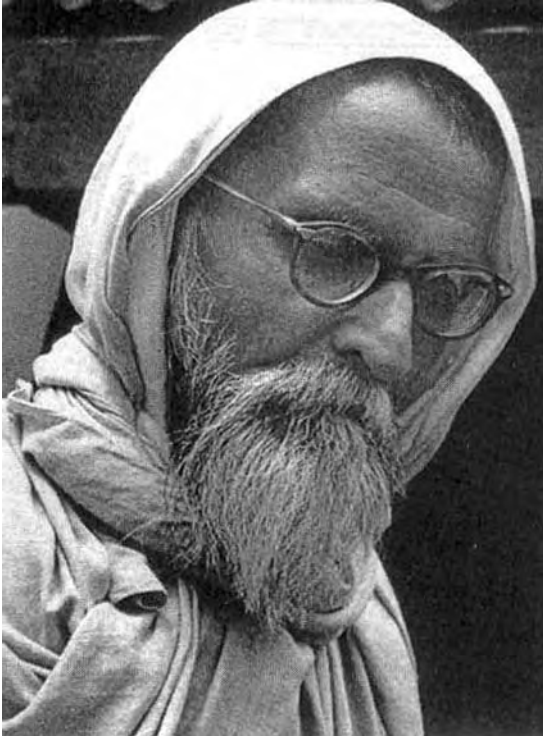
consciousness. Roast this seed of causal body and offer it at the feet of saints.³⁷

In one of her poems Janabai reveals the experience of Advaita with the rising of kundalini shakti: '*Jyota parabrahmī hoy, khecarī darpañine pāhe; Idā pingalā suṣumnā, tinhī pāhe hṛdayabhuvanā; Haḷuḷaḷu riḡha karī, sūksma hṛdaya antarī; Hṛdayakamalāvarī jāsi, janī mhañenī mukta hosi;* the flame merges in Brahman, which is seen in the space of heart. *Ida*, *pingala*, and *sushumna* move towards the region of heart. Gradually making their way, they enter the subtle space of heart. Then they reach the lotus of heart. Janabai says that the aspirant gets moksha' (81; *abhang* 338).

At times an aspirant may develop the ego of renunciation, while practising spiritual disciplines. The development of the attitude of

Janabai





Vinobha Bhawe

surrender to God, *ishvara-pranidhana*, helps to get rid of this ego. This idea is beautifully expressed by Janabai:

Vairāgya abhimāne phiravile jāte, mhanavoni jātenī bhāva khunīṭā; Sañcita mātṛkā vairāṇa ghāṭalī, avyakti ḍaḷalī vyaktāvyakta; Nāma tenī rupā ḍaḷiyelenī sarva, pīṭha bhārī nāva paṇḍharicā; Navala hā deva baisalā ḍaḷaṇīṇ, nāhi kelī janī nāmāyācī; I am moving this grinding stone [of samsara], having two parts of dispassion and pride, holding the handle of devotion. I fed all my past samskaras into the grinding stone. I have ground both the manifested and unmanifested in the Unmanifested. I have ground all names and forms. The flour thus grounded is collected by the Lord of Pandharpur [Vitthala]. The Lord also sat for grinding. Who can deny this wonder of Namdev's Janabai going beyond names and forms? (89; *abhang* 365).

In the following poem Janabai reveals her realisation:

Mājhe manīn jēn jēn hotēn, teṇ teṇ didhaleṇ ananīteṇ; Deha neūnī videhī kelenī, śānti deūnī mīpaṇa nelenī; Mūḷa nelenī heṇī krodhāceṇī, ṭhāneṇī kelenī vivekāceṇī; Nija padīnī dilā ṭhāva, janī mhaṇe dātā deva; God has fulfilled all my desires. Taking away my body, God has made me body-less. God has given me peace by snatching my ego. By taking away the root of anger, God has established discrimination in me. God has given me refuge at God's feet. Janabai says that God is a great giver (91; *abhang* 340)

While explaining Gita's teachings on the practice of yoga, Vinobha Bhawe (1895–1982) says:

'Yoga' is the name of the art or process by which these principles can be put into practice in the actual living. The word '*sankhya*' means principles or theory. '*Yoga*' means art of well-doing. Jnanadev bears witness: 'The art of living comes itself to *Yogis*.' The *Gita* is full of both, *sankhya* and *yoga*, science and art, *sastra* and *kalaa*. When science and art meet, life blossoms into beauty. Mere science is a castle in the air. One may understand the theory of music, but if one has not trained the voice and mastered the art of singing, then *nadabrahman* (God as sound) would not take shape for us. That is the reason why the Lord has taught not only the principles, but also the art of applying them.³⁸

Patanjali says in the *Yoga Sutra*: 'Avidyā consists in regarding a transient object as everlasting, an impure object as pure, misery as happiness and the not-Self as Self.'³⁹ And due to this *avidya* we consider the gross physical body as everything and hence keep ourselves engaged in pampering it. To practise yoga, it is very important to develop detachment towards the body and to consider it as just an instrument for doing spiritual practices. This is the idea Vinoba Bhawe expresses:

When attachment to the body goes, then one realises that the body is an instrument for service, and then the body also finds its real support and receives the honour due to it. But

today we regard pampering the body as the sole purpose of our lives. We have forgotten that the life is to be lived for the fulfilment of *svadharma*. One has to foster and cherish the body because only so can one perform one's *svadharma*. The need is not just to satisfy the cravings of the palate. It is all the same to the spoon whether you serve *halva* with it, or rice and *dal*. It doesn't feel pleased in the one case or dissatisfied in the other. The tongue too should be in the same happy position—it should, of course, have taste, but no pleasure or pain from it. The body is to be paid its due hire—no more than that. We have to use the *charkha* for spinning, so it is necessary to oil it. In the same way, we get work out of body, and we have to give it fuel. If we were to use it in this way, the body, though it is nothing in itself, can gain value and find its roots in the spirit. But instead of using the body as an instrument, we lose ourselves in it, and stunt our spirit. Thus, the body, which already was of little intrinsic value, becomes even more worthless. That is why the saints say firmly, 'It is wrong to be attached to the body and those related through the body, dogs and pigs too are worthy of affection. This body and those related to you through this body—do not worship these alone, day and night, my friend. Learn to recognise others too as belonging to you. The saints teach us thus to grow.'⁴⁰

The word 'yoga' has a very vast meaning and it could be any of the four yogas, namely, karma yoga, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, or raja yoga, interpreted according to one's own understanding. Many learned commentators derive various thought-provoking meanings of the word 'yoga'. One such erudite scholar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), who took active part in the Indian freedom movement, in his profound study of Gita observes the connection of yoga with action and propounds it as karma yoga. He attempts to remove the basic misconception of yoga:

The word 'YOGA' is even more complicated, in its meaning than the word '*karma*'. The

present-day ordinary meaning of this word is 'controlling the mental impulses of the organs by means of *prāṇāyāma* i.e., 'control of breath' or 'the Yoga of mental absorption or meditation prescribed by the Pātañjala-Sūtras', and the word has been used in the same meanings also in the Upaniṣads (Kaṭha. 6.11). But it must first be borne in mind that this restricted meaning is not the meaning in which it has been used in the Bhagavadgītā. The word 'Yoga' comes from the root '*yuj*' which means 'to join', and its root meaning is 'the state of union', 'combination', 'addition' or 'co-existence' or 'staying together', and later on, it has also come to mean the 'mean', 'device' or 'method' or 'thing to be done', that is, the '*Karma*' (Action) which is necessary for acquiring that state.⁴¹

About the exhaustiveness of the word 'yoga', Tilak says further:

In the Gītā, the word '*yoga*', '*yogi*' or other compounds from the word '*yoga*' have occurred about 80 times. But nowhere except in at most four or five places has it been used in the meaning of 'Pātañjala-yoga' (Gī. 6.12 and 23). We find almost everywhere the word used more or less in the meaning of 'means', 'skillful device', 'method', 'the thing to be done', 'union', etc., and it must be said that this is one of the comprehensive words used in the Gītā-science. Still, it is not enough even to say in a general way that '*yoga*' means 'means', 'skillful device', or 'method'. Because, according as the speaker may wish, it may be a means of Renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) or Action (*karma*) or mental control (*citta-nirodha*) or of Release (*Mokṣa*) or of something else. For instance, the word '*yoga*' has been used in the Gītā itself, in three or four places, to signify the divine skill or wonderful power of the Blessed Lord in creating the variegated perceptible creation (Gī. 7.25; 9.5; 10.7; 11.8) and on that account, the Blessed Lord has been referred to as '*Yogeśvara*' (Gī.18. 75) (76–7).

Tilak firmly feels that in the Gita action has been emphasised by the word 'yoga':



Bal Gangadhar Tilak

But this is not the principal meaning of the word ‘yoga’ in the Gītā. Therefore, in order to explain what particular skill, means, method or process is principally signified in the Gītā by the use of the word ‘yoga’, this word has intentionally been clearly defined in the Gītā itself as: ‘*yogah karmasu kaushalam*’ (Gī. 2. 50) i.e. “yoga” means some special skill, device, intelligent method, or graceful way of performing Actions’ ... If the Blessed Lord Himself has intentionally and specifically defined the word ‘yoga’ in the Gītā itself as ‘*yogah karmasu kaushalam*’ i.e., “Yoga” means a special device of performing Actions’, then, there should strictly speaking remain no doubt whatsoever about the primary meaning of this word in the Gītā (77).

Amritanubhava is a purely Advaita treatise

by Jnaneshvar (1275–96), who was regarded as an incarnation of God. In *Amritanubhava*, he narrates his intellectual insight of the world and his spiritual experiences in a most logical manner so as to establish the undiluted truth of Advaita or the supreme Self, and he establishes it as the only ultimate reality to be sought for. And no better topic can be so fitting as this to conclude the present discussion. Jnaneshvar says: ‘*Mhaṇoni saccitsukha, he bola vastuvācaka, navhatī heñi śeṣa vicārāñce; Aisen iyeñi prasiddheñi, cālaliñi saccidānandapadeñi, maga draṣṭya svasamvāde, bheṭatī jevhāñi*; the essence of all thinking is that the words *sat*, *chit*, and *sukha* do not indicate any entity. It is well-known that the word *sat-chit-ananda* helps only in intellectual understanding, but when the spiritual aspirant experiences one’s true nature [one understands its true meaning].’⁴²

Jnaneshvar continues to expound further, giving examples from our daily lives:

Phaḷa viūñi phūla suke, phaḷa nāṣe rasapākeñi, tohī rasa upakhe, trptidāñiñi; flower drops off after giving birth to a fruit, a fruit disappears after its juice is extracted, the juice also disappears after satisfying the drinker (42; verse 22).

Kāñ āhuti agñi-ānta, ghālūñi vosare hāta, sukha cevaūñi gīta, ugā rāhe; Nāñā mukhā mukha dāūñi, arisā jāya nighaūñi, kañ nideleni cevaūñi, ceviteni jaisen; taiseni saccidānandā cokhaṭā, dāūñi draṣṭyā draṣṭā, tinhiñi paden lāgaṭi vāṭā, maunācīyā; One’s hand returns after offering oblations to fire, a song ceases to exist after giving joy to the listener. Mirror’s work gets over after showing the reflection of a face. After waking up a sleeping person, the awakener goes away. Similarly the three words, *sat*, *chit*, *ananda*, silently vanish after clearly showing the knower one’s true nature (42; verse 23–5).

With the help of the following metaphors, Jnaneshvar strongly denies the existence of *avidya*, ignorance and its removal by mere instructions:

Avidyeci nāhīn jāti, tetheñ nāhīn mhañatayā yukti, jeñvī dupārī kañ vātī, aṅgañicīyā; Na peritāñ śetīñ, je kiñ sañvagañiyā jāti, tayā lājāparautī, joḍī āhe; Avidya, ignorance has no existence and hence, there is no need for arguing about it. Like, what is the use of a lamp in the courtyard in the afternoon? Without sowing the seeds, if one goes for harvesting, obviously they will be put to shame (57; verse 57–8).

Pāñiyāvarī barakhu, hotāñ keñ ase višekhu, avidyāñāśī unmekhu, phākāvā taisā; What good is it if it rains on the ocean? Similarly, all instructions to remove avidya are useless (57; verse 60).

While ridiculing the acceptance of *avidya*, ignorance, Jnaneshvar says:

Heñ aso mṛtyu āñi jñeñ, he śobhatī kāya mehuñe, tarī ātmena āsañeñ, ajñāñeñśī; aho ātmena je bādhe, teñci atmenaññ nāñde, aiññ kāyaśī viruddheñ, bolaññ iye; if life and death can exist together as brothers-in-law, then ajnana, ignorance and Atman can exist together. Is it not contradictory to say that ajnana dwells in Atman, when ajnana vanishes with the knowledge of Atman? (68; verse 29–30).

Dalāñkudapañā sañḍileñ, āñi āgīpañ mañḍileñ, taiñ teñci āgīñ jāleñ, iñdhan kiñ; Kāñ gañgā pāvata khevo, ānapañācā ṭhāvo, sañḍī taiñ gañgā ho, lāhe pāññ; coming in contact with fire, wood loses its wood-ness by becoming fuel for the fire; also when a stream unites with River Ganga, then it loses its quality of being a stream, by itself becoming Ganga (68; verse 32–3).

Je ajñāna yetheñ nase, tarīca ātmā ase, mhañonī bolaññ vāyaseñ, nāyakāvīñ kiñ; when ajnana does not exist and Atman alone exists, there is no point in talking about ajnana (69; verse 37).

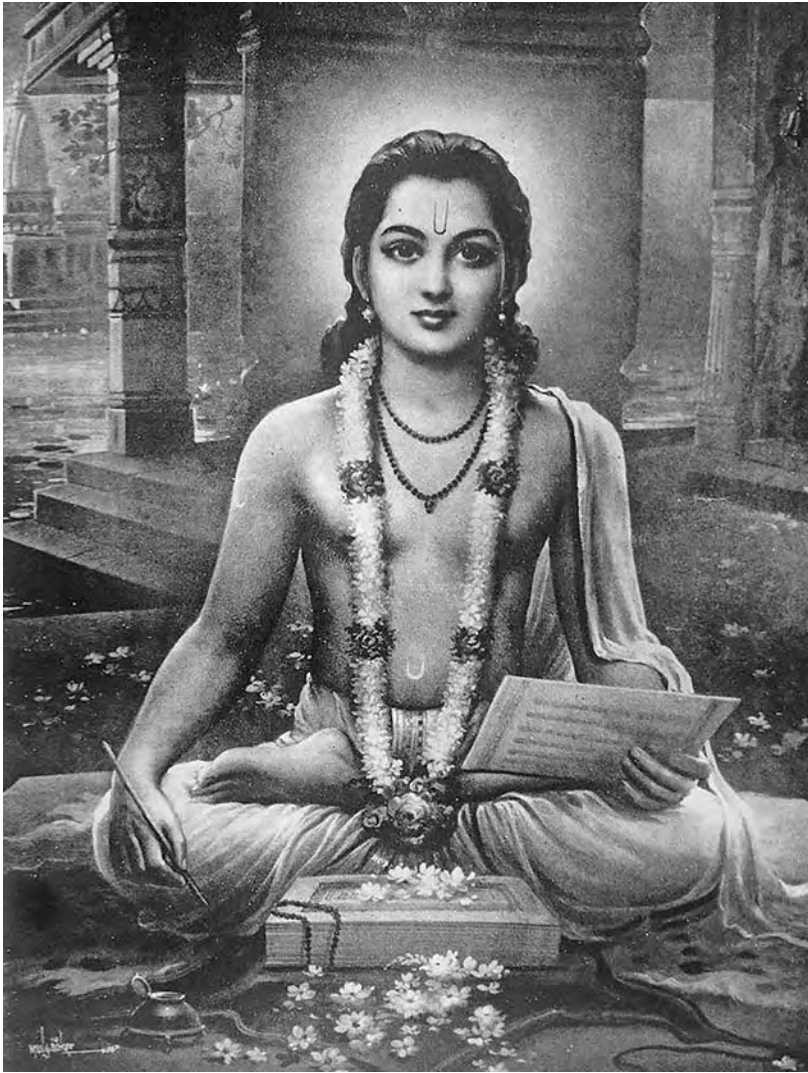
In the following verses Jnaneshvar establishes the truth that the supreme Self won't get affected in the least due to the apparent changes in external objects or activities. One can observe his subtle discrimination: '*Paḍileñ cañḍāvarī cañḍiñeñ, samudrī jāleñ varakhañeñ, viṣayā*

karāñeñ, bheṭatī taiññ; if the moonlight falls on the moon itself, then the light itself becomes the moon, from where it originally came. If it rains on the ocean, then the rain-water itself becomes ocean, from where rain originally came. Similarly, even though the senses enjoy the sense objects, there is no activity at the plane of the Atman [because nothing exists other than the Atman]' (112; verse 18).

Jnaneshvar says referring to the eightfold path or ashtanga yoga of raja yoga: '*Pratyahārādi āñgī, yogeñ āñga ṭekileñ yogīñ, ton jālā ye mārgī, dihācā cāñdu; the disciplines of ashtanga yoga like pratyahara, withdrawal of senses from the sense objects, and so on, surrender before a knower of Brahman. Just like the moon fades in broad daylight, the discipline of ashtanga yoga fades before a knower of Brahman' (113; verse 26).*

In a letter to a hatha yogi, Sri Changdev, Jnaneshvar asserts that Brahman and the perceptible universe are not different:

Pragaṭe tañva na dise, lape tañva tañva ābhāse, pragaṭa nā lapālā ase, na khomata jo; Babu jañva jañva hoye, tañva tañva kāñhīñca na hoye, kāñhīñ nahonī āhe, avaghāci to; Soneñ sonerīpanā unen, na yetāñci jhāleñ lenen, teñvi na veñcatāñ jaga hoñeñ, aṅge jayā; kallola kañcuka, na phedīñ ughaḍeñ udaka, teñvī jageñśī samyak, svarūpa jo; in the manifested universe, the supreme Self cannot be perceived. Though we might get some glimpses of the supreme Self in the universe, they are not its true nature. The supreme Self is neither manifested nor unmanifested, but is beyond both. Whenever the supreme Self appears as many, then nothing happens in reality. The supreme Self does not become anything and is complete as it is. Gold does not lose its gold-ness even if ornaments are made out of it. Similarly, though there are many names and forms in this universe, there is no change in the nature of the supreme Self. Just as the ocean appears to be covered with waves, the supreme Self appears to be covered by the universe (126; verse 2–5).


*Jnaneshvar*

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be understood that the main aim of yoga is to make us aware of our true nature, which is the supreme Self or supreme Consciousness. The yoga philosophy is as vast as the universe, and cannot be limited by taking a few opinions into consideration. There is and there should be enough scope for each one of us to understand and interpret this philosophy in one's own way according

to one's capacity. This need of every individual was understood by Swamiji and that is why he said: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'⁴³

It is clear that the supreme Soul alone exists and the aim of human life is to become aware of our true nature, which is nothing but the supreme Soul. Let us conclude this discussion with these words of Swamiji:

This universe of ours, the universe of the senses, the rational, the intellectual, is bounded on both sides by the illimitable, the unknowable, the ever unknown. Herein is the search, herein are the inquiries, here are the facts; from this comes the light which is known to the world as religion. Essentially, however, religion belongs to the supersensuous and not to the sense plane. It is beyond all reasoning, and not on the plane of intellect. It is a vision, an inspiration, a plunge into the unknown and unknowable, making the unknowable more than known, for it can never be 'known'. This search has been in the human mind, as I believe, from the very beginning of humanity. There cannot have been human reasoning and intellect in any period of the world's history without this struggle, this search beyond. In our little universe, this human mind, we see a thought arise. Whence it rises we do not know, and when it disappears, where it goes, we know not either. The macrocosm and the microcosm are, as it were, in the same groove, passing through the same stages, vibrating in the same key (4.203). 

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Three Types of Yogis

Swami Ishadhyanananda

IF YOU ASK SOMEONE familiar with Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, 'What are the spiritual disciplines of yoga?', you will most likely get the following answer: 'Why, the eightfold yoga: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*.'

Although the above answer is not wrong, it is only 33.33 per cent correct, so to speak. Why the answer is only 33.33 per cent accurate is the focus of this article.

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Four Preliminary Questions: Anubandha Chatushtayah

It is customary in Indian spiritual and philosophical discussions to ask four fundamental questions before undertaking the study of any scriptural text. These four fundamental questions are called *anubandha chatushtayah* in Sanskrit. They are: *vishaya*, *prayojana*, *sambandha*, and *adbhikari*.

Vishaya means the subject matter of a text. While there could be a variety of topics discussed in a text, the topics revolve around one fundamental thesis. In most cases, that thesis involves

the nature of the ultimate spiritual reality and our relationship with it.

Prayojana means the purpose of a text. There is a well-known saying: 'Even a fool does not venture into something without a purpose.'¹ Why should one study a text? The answer to this question is *prayojana* or purpose. In the context of Indian spiritual traditions, *prayojana* is always the complete cessation of all suffering and attainment of the highest bliss. This could be achieved only through liberation or *moksha*. Liberation from what? The repeated cycle of births and deaths which are at the root of our sufferings.

Sambandha refers to the connection between the *vishaya* and *prayojana*. How will the subject matter of a text lead to its goal? The answer to this question is *sambandha*. Personal experience of the ultimate reality, which is the *vishaya*, is the cause of liberation, the *prayojana*. This is the *sambandha*, connection, between the *vishaya* and *prayojana*.

Adhikara means competency. A competent person is called an *adhikari*, one who would get the highest benefit from a text. Anyone can read any text if one wishes. But, every text is not meant for everyone. This is much more true of a scriptural text. 'What are the prerequisite qualifications for undertaking the study of a text?' The answer to this question is *adhikara*, competency. One who has those qualifications is an *adhikari*, competent person.

Types of Adhikaris

Hinduism takes into account of the fact that everyone is not capable for everything; there are degrees of competency among human beings. Just as all the computer engineers are not of the same category—there are superior, average, and ordinary types of engineers—so also among the spiritual aspirants exist divisions or categories based on their competency. For example, Advaita Vedanta classifies *adhikaris* into the following three categories.

Uttama adhikari, the superior aspirants, are those who are so prepared for the teachings of Advaita Vedanta that as soon as they hear the *mahavakya*, great Vedic dictum, 'Tat tvam asi; you are that',² from the guru, they realise the truth immediately; they experience the unity of the individual self, Atman, and the cosmic self, Brahman. Such aspirant of the highest category is quite rare. These aspirants don't require any spiritual practice and it is believed that they already have perfected those disciplines in their previous births.

Madhyama adhikari, the middling aspirants, have to practise sustained thinking on the *mahavakya* through a process called *shravana-manana-nididhyasana*, listening, reflecting, and meditating, as long as they don't realise the truth. Through prolonged and uninterrupted practice of the above, they would directly experience the unity of Atman and Brahman. These type of aspirants are also not very common.

Adhama adhikari, the inferior aspirants, are those who don't have adequate purity and concentration of the mind. Even if they follow the process of *shravana-manana-nididhyasana*, they have many doubts and fluctuations of the mind. For them, the recommendation is to practise the *sadhana chatustayah*, the fourfold spiritual disciplines. These disciplines are: *viveka*, discernment between the real and the unreal; *vairagya*, dispassion; the six practices of *shama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *samadhana*, *itiksha*, and *shraddha*; and *mumukshutva*, an intense desire for moksha. Although the disciplines are said to be fourfold, they are nine in number. These disciplines are necessary to achieve the required purity and one-pointedness of the mind. Without these, *shravana-manana-nididhyasana* won't bear any result. This is true for most of the spiritual aspirants since most of them belong to this last category. That may sound unpleasant, but it is a fact we should reckon with.

In short, in the context of Advaita Vedanta, the superior aspirants have all the required qualifications for enlightenment and they only need to hear the truth from the guru; the middling aspirant has to practice the core spiritual practice of *shravana-manana-nididhyasana*, and; the inferior aspirant has to practice the four-fold spiritual disciplines along with the core spiritual practice of *shravana-manana-nididhyasana*.

Adhikaris for Yoga

The above classifications of the aspirants for Advaita Vedanta are more or less well known. In the discourses on Advaita Vedanta, they are often mentioned by the teachers, apparently to impress upon the students the fact that just listening to Advaita discourses and getting intellectual conviction about the unity of Atman and Brahman are not enough. Differences in competence explains why some people get the nondual realisation very early in their life and why some can't get anywhere near it even after reading hundreds of texts or listening to hundreds of lectures on Advaita Vedanta.

In yoga discourses, however, classifications of aspirants into three categories—*uttama*, *madhyama*, and *adhama*—is not as common as Advaita Vedanta. The teachers of the *Yoga Sutra* usually do not mention them clearly.

The chief reason for that appears to be the fact that the vast majority of people are inferior types of aspirants, *adhama adhikari*. For them ashtanga yoga are the disciplines prescribed by Patanjali in the later part of the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*. Since the *uttama* and *madhyama adhikaris* are rare in number, the spiritual practices meant for them are also not discussed as frequently as the ashtanga yoga. As a result, ashtanga yoga has come to be known as the disciplines of yoga.

Another reason for ashtanga yoga's sole popularity could be this: most of the teachers of the *Yoga Sutra* rely only on the commentary of Vyasa. No doubt Vyasa's commentary is indispensable for understanding the *Yoga Sutra*; Vyasa, however, does not explicitly mention the three types of *adhikaris* for yoga.

If we, however, take the clues from the commentary of Vijnanabhikshu, we can decode that Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* recognises three types of yogis and, for the three types of yogis, prescribes three sets of disciplines.

Abhyasa-Vairagya for the Superior Yogis

In his commentary on the beginning of the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*, Vyasa writes: 'Yoga for the aspirants with a one-pointed mind has been told in the first chapter. Now, the second



chapter is being started with a view to explaining how the aspirants with distracted minds can attain the goal.³ That is to say, Vyasa recognises two types of aspirants: those with a one-pointed mind and those with a distracted mind.

What are the disciplines prescribed for those with a one-pointed mind? The answer is given in the twelfth aphorism of the first chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*: 'Restraining that with practice and dispassion, *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.'⁴

Restraining of what? *Chitta vrittis*, the thought-waves. Restraining of the thought-waves is yoga. That is also the goal of yoga because when thought-waves are restrained, the Purusha, consciousness, abides in its true nature, which is nothing other than *kaivalya*, liberation, the ultimate goal of yoga.

How are the *vrittis* to be restrained? According to Patanjali, practice and dispassion are the two qualities for *nirodha*, restraint of mind. Vi-jnanabhikshu reminds us of the Bhagavadgita, wherein Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that through *abhyasa* and *vairagya* the mind can be controlled: 'The mind is undoubtedly fickle and difficult to control, O Arjuna. But it can be controlled by *abhyasa*, practice, and *vairagya*, dispassion.'⁵ Patanjali mentions the same two qualities for regulating the mind in the abovementioned aphorism.

Patanjali defines *abhyasa*, practice, as the effort to keep the mind one-pointed.⁶ To remain one-pointed and thought-less is a steady state of the mind. The effort to keep the mind one-pointed is *abhyasa*, practice. It is important to note that the mind won't remain one-pointed on its own—for that, effort is required.

Vairagya is defined by Patanjali as the absence of craving for sense objects (1.15). Here, Vyasa makes an important note. He observes that dispassion should mean absence of inclination either to accept or to reject the sense objects. Real dispassion is indifference to sense objects

whether in their presence or absence.⁷ Vachaspati Mishra, another commentator, points out that one might be free from hankering for objects because one knows nothing about them, but this does not qualify as dispassion; dispassion is indifference to objects even when they are available for experiencing them.⁸

The idea is that the natural tendencies of the mind for sense objects should be checked by dispassion. Then, by practice, the *chitta* should be made one-pointed and restrained.

Kriya Yoga for the Middling Yogis

In the first chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*, the goal, nature, and means of yoga are explained. They are, respectively, *kaivalya*, *chitta-vritti-nirodha*, and *abhyasa-vairagya*. One might ask: What is the necessity of the second chapter then?

As if to answer this question, Vyasa introduces the second chapter with the observation that the second chapter is meant for the aspirants with a distracted mind.

The second chapter starts with the spiritual disciplines prescribed for one whose mind is distracted. These disciplines are technically called *kriya* yoga, which consists of three disciplines: *tapas*, austerity; *svadhyaya*, study; and *ishvara-pranidhana*, surrender to God.

Tapas means the control of the senses. Vyasa says there is no question of yoga for one who does not practise self-discipline.⁹ Impurities of the mind propel the mind towards the sense objects. This deeply ingrained habit cannot be removed without self-discipline, which however, should be of a gentle kind that will not disrupt the clarity of the mind or weaken the body.

Svadhyaya is defined by Vyasa as *japa*, the repetitive chanting of mantras such as Om and the study of scripture.¹⁰ By studying the scriptures, the yogi gains knowledge and inspiration. By chanting Om and contemplating on its

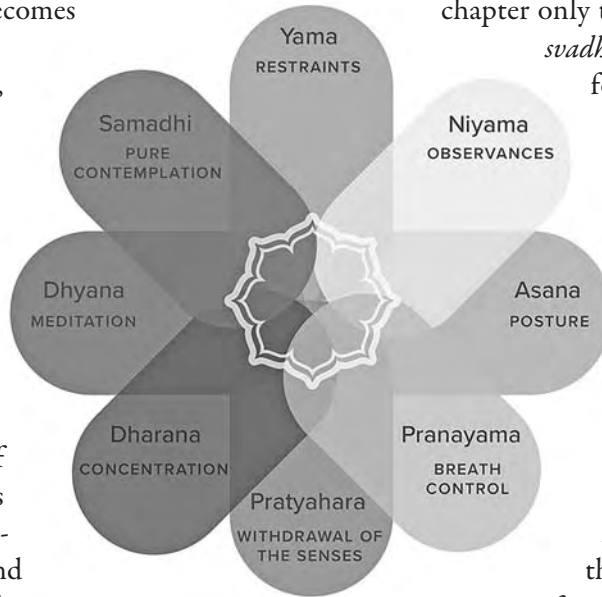
meaning, the mind becomes one-pointed.

Ishvara-pranidhana, defines Vyasa, is the dedication of all actions to God, *ishvara*.¹¹ Vijnanabhikshu notes that, in the first chapter, devotion to God is mentioned in the context of God as the object of meditation, and takes the form of concentration on God's name and its meaning; whereas here, *kriya* yoga being more action-oriented, devotion to *ishvara* takes the form of renunciation of selfish actions and the offering of the fruits of actions to God.¹² It is important to note that surrender to God is not merely an option in *kriya* yoga, as it is when it is presented as an object of meditation in the first chapter. It is a mandatory part of *kriya* yoga.

Let us now pause for a moment and ask an important question.

If practice and dispassion is for the aspirants with one-pointed mind and *kriya* yoga is for those with a distracted mind, why then does Patanjali introduce ashtanga yoga, the eightfold disciplines, in the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*?¹³ Moreover, one of those eight limbs, namely *niyama*, includes all the three disciplines which constitute the *kriya* yoga.

Vijnanabhikshu illumines this point. He writes in his commentary on the twenty-eighth aphorism of the second chapter of *Yoga Sutra*: 'In the previous chapter the disciplines of *abhyasa* and *vairagya* for the superior aspirants have been told. After that, in the beginning of this



chapter only the disciplines of *tapas-svadhya-ishvarapranidhana* for the mediocre aspirants have been told. After that, the means of yoga beginning with *yama*, and the like, are being told for the inferior aspirants.¹⁴

This is indeed a very significant observation. Vijnanabhikshu explicitly makes it clear that there are three types of *adhikaris* for yoga: *uttama*, *madhyama*, and *adhama*. Accordingly, there are three types of yogis: *uttama* yogi, superior yogi; *madhyama* yogi, middling yogi; and *adhama* yogi, inferior yogi.

So, according to Vijnanabhikshu, *kriya* yoga is prescribed for the middling yogis, yogis who are not fit to take up practice and dispassion, which require a predominance of *sattva* and are difficult for the active and outgoing mind, that is still under the influence of *rajas* and *tamas*. For them *kriya* yoga has been prescribed by Patanjali. When the mind is more *sattvic*, through the practice of *kriya* yoga, it is more capable of remaining fixed in practice and dispassion. *Kriya* yoga is the preparatory aspect of yoga for the middling yogis.

Ashtanga Yoga for Inferior Yogis

As we have seen above, according to Vijnanabhikshu, ashtanga yoga, the eightfold yoga, is for the inferior yogis. For them, even *kriya* yoga is not sufficient. They need to start their journey from *yama*, abstentions and *niyama*, observations, until they gain sufficient purity of the mind for the practice of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.

Since most of us are not sufficiently *sattvic*, most of us belong to the third category of yogis, the *adhama* yogis or inferior yogis. The practice prescribed by Patanjali for this category is ashtanga yoga. That is how yoga-sadhana, yoga practices, have become synonymous with ashtanga yoga.

What are the eight limbs of ashtanga yoga? They are: *yama*, abstentions; *niyama*, observances; *asana*, posture; *pranayama*, breath control; *pratyahara*, disengagement of the senses; *dharana*, concentration; *dhyana*, meditation; and *samadhi*, absorption. A detailed description of the disciplines is beyond the scope of this article.

We should remember that the first five limbs of the eightfold yoga are the preparatory aspects of yoga for the inferior yogis. The inferior yogis need to practise *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, and *pratyahara* to increase the predominance of *sattva* in the mind. With such a *sattvic* mind, they can then take up the practice of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.


The Correct Answer

So, the correct answer to the question, ‘What are the spiritual disciplines of yoga?’, should be this: *abhyasa-vairagya*, *kriya* yoga, and ashtanga yoga respectively for the superior, middling, and inferior yogis.

The critical point to remember is that the practice of *abhyasa-vairagya* is common to all the three types of *adhikaris*. The superior yogis are capable for *abhyasa-vairagya* without any other auxiliary yoga disciplines. The middling yogis need to practise *kriya* yoga to be able to reach a state, where they can take up *abhyasa-vairagya*. The inferior yogis have to practise the entire gamut of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, and *pratyahara* to be able to take up *abhyasa-vairagya*.

The above three types of yogis differ in the degrees of *sattva*, purity of the mind. With a pure mind the aspirant has to continue the practice of

dharana, concentration; *dhyana*, meditation; and *samadhi*, absorption; until the mind reaches the state of *nirodha*, complete cessation of thoughts.

The *Yoga Sutra* recognises the difference in competence among the aspiring yogis and prescribes different sets of *sadhana* for each of them, so that each can start from where they are and, with wholehearted, uninterrupted practice, can attain *kaivalya*, the highest goal of yoga. 

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4. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.12.
5. *Gita*, 6.35.
6. *Yoga Sutra*, 1.13.
7. Vyasa’s commentary on Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.15: ‘*Heyopadeya-shunya vashikara-samjna vairagyam*’.
8. Vachaspati Mishra, *Tattva-vaisharadi*, 1.15: ‘*Asanga-dvesha-rahitopeksha-buddhir-vashikara-samjna*’.
9. Vyasa’s commentary on Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 2.1: ‘*Natapasvino yogah sidhyati*’.
10. ‘*Svadyayah pranavadi-pavitranam japo mokshashastra-adhyayanam va*’.
11. ‘*Ishvarapranidhanam sarvakriyanam paramaguravarpanam tat-phala-sannyaso va*’.
12. Vijnanabhikshu, *Yogavarttika*, 2.1: ‘*Phalasan-nyasah karmarpanam cha kriyayogo bhavati, karmasheshatvat-tajjapas-tadarthabhavanamiti purvoktam cha bhavanarupam pranidhanam jnanameva, karma-tachcheshatvayor-abhavad-ityarthah*’.
13. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.29.
14. *Yogavarttika*, 2.28: ‘*Purvapade hy-uttama-adhikarinam abhyasa-vairagye eva yogayoh sadhanam-uktam, tatashcha madhyama-adhikarinam tapas-svadyayeshvara-pranidhananyapi kevalani sadhanany-etasya padasya-adavuktani, atah param manda-adhikarinam yamadinyapi yogasadhanani vaktavyani*’.



The Fruit of Patanjali's Yoga: Engaging the World in Freedom

Ian Whicher

Introduction

THIS PAPER CENTRES ON the thought of Patanjali (c. 200–300 CE), the great exponent of the authoritative classical yoga school, *darshana*, of Hinduism and the reputed author of the *Yoga Sutra*. I will argue that Patanjali's philosophical perspective has, far too often, been looked upon as excessively 'spiritual' or isolationistic to the point of being a world-denying

philosophy, indifferent to moral endeavour, neglecting the world of nature and culture, and overlooking the highest potentials for human reality, vitality, creativity, and service. Contrary to the arguments presented by many scholars, which associate Patanjali's yoga exclusively with extreme asceticism, mortification, denial, and the renunciation and abandonment of 'material existence', *prakriti*, in favour of an elevated and isolated 'spiritual state', *purusha* or disembodied state of spiritual liberation, I suggest that Patanjali's yoga can be seen as a responsible engagement, in various ways, of 'spirit'—*purusha* or the intrinsic

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identity as the Self, the 'seer', pure consciousness, the masculine component of reality—and 'matter'—prakriti or the unmanifested source of psychophysical being as well as manifested life that includes mind, body, all of nature, the feminine component of reality—resulting in a highly developed, transformed, and participatory human nature and identity, an integrated and embodied state of liberated, yet engaged selfhood, *jivanmukti*.

The interpretation of Patanjali's yoga *darshana* presented here, which walks the fine line between an historical and a hermeneutic-praxis—some might say theological or 'systematic' orientation—counters the radically dualistic, isolationistic, and ontologically oriented interpretations of yoga¹ presented by many scholars and suggests an open-ended, epistemologically and morally oriented hermeneutics which, I maintain, is more appropriate for arriving at a genuine assessment of Patanjali's system.

The system of classical yoga is often reduced to or fitted into a classical Sankhya scheme—the interpretations of which generally follow along radically dualistic lines. Metaphysically, classical Sankhya and yoga are closely akin. However, both systems hold divergent views on important areas of doctrinal structure such as epistemology, ontology, ethics, and psychology, as well as differences pertaining to terminology. These differences derive in part from the distinct methodologies adopted by the two schools: Sankhya, it has been argued, emphasises a theoretical or intellectual analysis through inference and reasoning in order to bring out the nature of final emancipation, while yoga stresses yogic perception and multiple forms of practice that culminate in samadhi. Additionally, there is clear evidence throughout all the four padas of the *Yoga Sutra* of an extensive network of terminology that

parallels Buddhist and Jain teachings, which are notably absent in classical Sankhya literature. For instance, Patanjali includes several sutras on the 'restraints' or *yamas*, namely, nonviolence, ahimsa; truthfulness, *satya*; non-stealing, *asteya*; chastity, *brahmacharya*; and non-possession or greed-less-ness, *aparigraha*; which comprise the 'eight-limbed' path of yoga as listed in the *Acharanga Sutra* of Jainism, the earliest sections of which may date from the third or fourth century BCE, thereby suggesting possible Jain influences on the yoga tradition.

I argue that many scholars have fallen prey to reading the *Yoga Sutra* from the most abstract level of dualism of purusha and prakriti down to an understanding of the practices advocated. In other words, they have engaged in a top-down reading, which elicits the concrete action or experience from the abstract metaphysics or theory. Then they proceed to impute an experiential foundation to the whole scheme informed not from mystical insight or yogic experience, but from the effort to form a consistent world view—which rests in a presumption of a disjunctive duality—that culminates in a radical dualistic finality² or closure. What is more, yoga scholarship has not clarified what 'dualistic' means or why yoga had to be 'dualistic'. Even in avowedly non-dualistic systems of thought such as Advaita Vedanta we can find numerous examples of basically dualistic modes of description and explanation.³

Patanjali's philosophy is not based upon mere theoretical or speculative knowledge. It is founded on, and therefore elicits a practical, pragmatic, experiential or perceptual, not merely inferential or theoretical, approach that Patanjali deems essential in order to deal effectively with our total human situation and provide real freedom, not just a theory of liberation or a metaphysical explanation of life. Yoga is not

content with knowledge, *jnana*, perceived as a state that abstracts away from the world removing us from our human embodiment and activity in the world. Rather, yoga emphasises knowledge in the integrity of *being and action* and as serving the integration of the ‘person’ as a ‘whole’. Franklin Edgerton concluded in a study dedicated to the meaning of yoga: ‘Yoga is not a “system” of belief or of metaphysics. It is always a way, a method of getting something, usually salvation.’⁴ But this does not say enough. It does not fully take into account what might be called the integral nature of Patanjali’s yoga. Yoga derives its real strength and value through an *integration* of theory and practice.⁵

Cessation (*nirodha*) and the ‘Return to the Source’ (*pratiprasava*): Transformation, Elimination, or Negation of the Mind?

In Patanjali’s central definition of yoga, yoga is defined as ‘the cessation, *nirodha*, of [the misidentification with] the functioning, transformations, fluctuations, *vrittis*, of the mind or ordinary awareness, *chitta*’.⁶ We must then ask: What *kind* of ‘cessation’ is Patanjali actually referring to in his classical definition of yoga? What does the process of cessation actually entail for the yogi: ethically, epistemologically, ontologically, psychologically, and so on? I have elsewhere suggested⁷ that *nirodha* denotes an epistemological emphasis and refers to the transformation of self-understanding brought about through the purification and illumination of consciousness; *nirodha* is not, for the yogi, the ontological cessation of *prakriti*—in this case, the mind and *vrittis*. Thus, *nirodha* is not, as is often explained, an inward movement that annihilates or suppresses *vrittis*, thoughts, intentions, or ideas, *pratyaya*, nor is it the non-existence or absence of *vrittis*; rather, *nirodha*

involves a progressive unfoldment of perception, *yogi-pratyaksha*, that eventually reveals our authentic identity as being rooted in Purusha. It is the state of affliction, *klesha*, evidenced in the mind and not the mind *itself* that is at issue. To be clear, *chitta-vritti* does not stand for all modifications or mental processes—cognitive, affective, and emotive—but is the very seed, *bija*, mechanism of afflicted identity; the misidentification of consciousness with *prakriti* from which all other *vrittis* and thoughts arise and are (mis)appropriated or self-referenced in the state of ignorance, *avidya*, that is, the unenlightened state of mind. Spiritual ignorance gives rise to a profound dysfunction or misalignment of *vrittis* with consciousness, which yoga can remedy, thereby allowing for a proper alignment or ‘right’ functioning of *vrittis* (*ibid.*). It is the *chitta-vritti* as our confused and mistaken identity, not the *vrittis* themselves, thoughts and experiences in total, that must be brought to a state of definitive cessation. Yoga thus purifies and liberates the *chitta-vritti* dynamic from ignorance and enables one, I suggest, to get beyond afflicted identity, as ordinary awareness masquerading as consciousness.

To be sure, there is a suspension and transcendence of all the mental processes as well as any identification with an object, that is, in *asamprajnata-samadhi*, this being for the final purification of the mind (*ibid.*, chapter 6), but it would be misleading to conclude that higher *samadhi* results in a permanent or definitive cessation of the *vrittis* in total, thereby predisposing the yogi, who has attained purity of mind to exist in an incapacitated, isolated, or mindless state and therefore of being incapable of living a balanced, useful, and productive life in various ways.

The three *gunas* of *prakriti* are purity, light, or virtue; dynamic activity; and dullness, inertia,

or delusion; or *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* respectively. The purpose of the *gunas* as outlined in the *Yoga Sutra* 2.18 and 2.21 is to provide experience, *bhoga*, and liberation, *apavarga*, for the unliberated practitioner, that is, they ultimately have a soteriological role. From the perspective of the discerning yogi, *viveki*, human identity contained within the domain of the three *gunas* amounts to nothing more than sorrow and dissatisfaction, *dubkha*.⁸ The declared goal of classical yoga, as with Sankhya and Buddhism, is to overcome all dissatisfaction, *dubkha*,⁹ by bringing about an inverse movement or counter-flow, *pratiprasava*¹⁰—variously referred to as ‘return to the origin’,¹¹ ‘process-of-involution’,¹² ‘dissolution into the source’,¹³ or ‘withdrawal from manifestation’—a kind of reabsorption into the transcendent purity of being itself.

Does a ‘return to the origin’, *pratiprasava*, culminate in a state of freedom in which one is stripped of all human identity and void of any association with the world including one’s practical livelihood? I argue that Patanjali leaves much room for understanding ‘dissolution’ or

‘return to the source’ with an epistemological emphasis thereby allowing the whole system of the yoga *darshana* to be interpreted along more open-ended lines. In other words, what actually ‘dissolves’ or terminates in yoga is the yogi’s misidentification with *prakriti*, a mistaken identity of self that—contrary to authentic identity, namely *purusha*—can be nothing more than a product of the three *gunas* under the influence of spiritual ignorance. Understood as such, *pratiprasava* need not denote the definitive ontological dissolution of manifest *prakriti* for the yogi, but rather refers to the process of ‘making subtle’ or ‘making *sattva*’ of consciousness so necessary for the uprooting of misidentification—the incorrect world view born of *avidya*—or incapacity of the yogi to ‘see’ from the yogic perspective of the seer, *drashta*, our authentic identity as *purusha*.

‘Aloneness’, *kaivalya*: Implications for an Embodied Freedom

In the classical traditions of Sankhya and Yoga, *kaivalya*, meaning ‘aloneness’,¹⁴ is generally



understood to be the state of the unconditional existence of purusha; however, this 'aloneness' is often misconstrued as a disconnection from others and severance from world engagement. On the contrary, in the *Yoga Sutra*, *kaivalya* can refer more precisely to the 'aloneness of seeing', *drishbh kaivalyam*, or 'oneness of life', which, as Patanjali states, follows from the disappearance of ignorance, *avidya*, and its creation of *samyoga*¹⁵—the conjunction or apparent conflation of the seer, purusha, and that which can be seen, that is, *chitta*, *gunas*—explained by Vyasa as a mental superimposition, *adhyaropa*.¹⁶ 'Aloneness' thus can be construed as purusha's innate capacity for pure, unbroken, non-attached seeing, perceiving, observing, or 'knowing' of the content of the mind, *chitta*.¹⁷

According to yet another sutra, we are told that *kaivalya* is established when the *sattva* of consciousness has reached a state of purity analogous to that of the purusha.¹⁸ Through the process of 'making subtle' or 'return to the origin', *pratiprasava* in the *sattva*, the transformation, *parinama*, of the mind, *chitta*, takes place at the deepest level bringing about a radical change in perspective: the former impure, fabricated states constituting a fractured identity of self are dissolved resulting in the complete purification of mind. Through knowledge, in *samprajnata*-*samadhi*, and its transcendence, in *asamprajnata*-*samadhi*, self-identity overcomes its lack of intrinsic grounding, a lack sustained and exacerbated by the web of afflictions in the form of attachment, *raga*; aversion, *dvesha*; and the compulsive clinging to life based on the fear of extinction, *abhinivesha*. The yogi is no longer dependent on liberating knowledge, mind-*sattva*,¹⁹ and is no longer attached to the constant fluctuations of the mind and its thought processes, *vrittis* as a basis for self-identity. As expressed earlier, cessation does not mark a

definitive disappearance of the *gunas* from purusha's view and the yogi's experience.²⁰ For the liberated yogi, the *gunas* cease to exist in the form of *avidya* and its mental impressions, *samskaras*, *vrittis*, and false or fixed ideas, *pratyaya*, of selfhood that formerly veiled true identity. Without the veil of *avidya*, the changing modes of *guna* cannot alter the yogi's now purified and firmly established consciousness. The mind has been liberated from the egocentric world of attachment to things that function under the purview of *prakriti*.

Thus, *kaivalya*, I suggest, in no way destroys or negates the personality of the yogi, but is an unconditional state in which all the obstacles or distractions preventing an immanent and purified relationship or engagement of person with nature, *prakriti*, and spirit, purusha have been removed. The crucial, ontological, point to be made here is that in the 'aloneness' of *kaivalya*, *prakriti* ceases to perform an obstructing role. In effect, *prakriti* herself has become purified, illuminated, and liberated²¹ from *avidya*'s grip including the misconceptions, misappropriations, and misguided relations implicit within a world of afflicted identity.

The reason for challenging an isolationistic understanding of Patanjali's highly nuanced system is as follows. Not being content with mere theoretical knowledge, yoga is committed to a practical way of life. To this end, Patanjali included in his presentation of yoga an outline of the 'eight-limbed' path, *ashtanga-yoga*,²² dealing with the physical, moral, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the yogi, an integral path that emphasises organic continuity, balance, and integration in contrast to the discontinuity, imbalance, and disintegration inherent in *samyoga*. The idea of cosmic balance and of the mutual support and upholding of the various parts of nature and society is not

foreign to yoga thought. Vyasa deals with the theory of 'nine causes', *nava karanani*, or types of causation according to tradition.²³ The ninth type of cause is termed *dhriti*, meaning 'support' or 'sustenance'. Based on Vyasa's explanation of *dhriti* we can see how mutuality and sustenance are understood as essential conditions for the maintenance of the natural and social world. There is an organic interdependence of all living entities wherein all, that is the elements, animals, humans, and divine bodies, work together for the 'good' of the whole and for each other. Far from renouncing the world, liberated yogis have transformed themselves, gaining new access to the world, and are thereby enabled to engage and transform the world.

In the last chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*, *Kaivalya* Pada, 'aloneness', *kaivalya*, is said to ensue upon the attainment of *dharmamegha*-samadhi, the 'cloud of dharma' samadhi. At this point, the mind and actions are freed from misidentification and affliction and one is no longer deluded or confused with regard to one's true form, *svarupa*, or intrinsic identity. This clarity about identity is highly significant to self-less action in the world. This is due to the fact that at this stage of practice the yogi is disconnected, *viyoga*, from all patterns of action motivated by ego, even the attachment to reward or 'profit' from her or his meditational practice. According to both Vyasa (4.30)²⁴ and Vijñanabhikṣu,²⁵ one to whom this high state of purification takes place is designated as a *jivanmukta*: one who is liberated while still alive, that is, embodied or living liberation. Engagement with the world at large by such individuals occurs without selfishness, greed, insecurity, narcissism, false perception, delusion, or wrong motivation. This is highly significant to beneficial worldly engagement because when one engages the world through the lens of an afflicted and deluded identity, the

resulting actions and reactions will be similarly afflicted and disordered.

By transcending the normative conventions and obligations of the operation of karma, the yogi acts morally not as an extrinsic response out of obedience to an external moral code of conduct, but as an intrinsic response and as a matter of natural, purified inclination. The stainless luminosity of pure consciousness is revealed as one's fundamental nature. The yogi does not act as others do, who are bound by the spiritual ignorance inherent in normal existence in *samsara*, and ceases to act from the perspective of a delusive sense of self confined within prakṛiti's domain. Relinquishing all obsessive or selfish concern, with the results of activity, the yogi remains wholly detached from the fruits of action resulting due to the sense of ego.²⁶ This does not imply that the yogi loses all orientation for action. It is important to remember that it is only attachment—and compulsive, inordinate desire or craving—not action itself, that sets in motion the law of moral causation, karma, by which a person is implicated in *samsara*. The yogi is said to be non-attached to either virtue or non-virtue, and is no longer oriented within the ego-logical patterns of thought as in the epistemologically distorted and confused condition of *saṃyoga*.

This does not mean, as some scholars have misleadingly concluded, that the spiritual adept or yogi is free to commit immoral acts,²⁷ or that the yogi is motivated by selfish concerns.²⁸ Actions must not only be executed in the spirit of unselfishness, sacrifice, or detachment, they must also be ethically sound, reasonable and justifiable. Moreover, the yogi's spiritual journey—far from being an 'a-moral process'²⁹—is a *highly moral process*! The yogi's commitment to the making *sattva* of consciousness, including the cultivation of moral virtues such as compassion,

karuna,³⁰ and nonviolence, *ahimsa* (2.35), is not an 'a-moral' enterprise, nor is it an expression of indifference, aloofness, or an uncaring attitude to others. Moral disciplines are engaged as a natural outgrowth of intelligent, *sattvic*, self-understanding, insight that arises out of highly advanced consciousness and commitment to self-transcendence that takes consciousness out of, ec-stasis, its identification with the rigid structure of the monadic ego, thereby reversing the inveterate tendency of this ego to inflate itself at the expense of its responsibility in relation to others.

I wish to suggest, therefore, that through the necessary transformation of consciousness brought about through yogic discipline, an authentic and fruitful coherence of self-identity, perception, and activity emerges out of the former fragmented consciousness in *samyoga*. If Patanjali's perception of the world of forms and differences had been destroyed or discarded, how could he have had such insight into yoga and the intricacies and subtle nuances of the unenlightened state?³¹ If through *nirodha* the individual form and the whole world had been cancelled for Patanjali, he would more likely have spent the rest of his days in the inactivity and isolation of transcendent oblivion rather than undertake the effort to systematise and present the yoga philosophy to others! Rather than being handicapped by the exclusion of thinking, perceiving, experiencing, or activity, the liberated yogi actualises the potential to live a fully integrated life in the world. I conclude here that there is no reason why the liberated yogi cannot be portrayed as a vital, creative, thoughtful, empathetic, balanced, happy, and wise person.

Yoga presupposes the integration of contemplation and activity; there can be no scission between *theoria* and *praxis*. The *Yoga Sutra* is a philosophical text where *praxis* is deemed to be

essential. Without actual practice the theory that informs yoga would have no authentic meaning. Yet without examination and reflection there would be no meaningful striving for liberation, no 'goal', as it were, to set one's sight on. In an original, inspiring, and penetrating style, Patanjali bridges metaphysics and ethics, transcendence and immanence, and contributes to the Indic and global fold, a form of philosophical investigation that, to borrow J Taber's descriptive phrase in another context, can properly be called a 'transformative philosophy'. That is to say, it is a philosophical perspective which 'does not stand as an edifice isolated from experience; it exists only insofar as it is realized in experience'.³²

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the *purusha* indeed has some precedence over *prakriti* in Patanjali's system, for *purusha* is what is ordinarily 'missing' or concealed in human life and is ultimately the state of consciousness one must awaken to in yoga. The liberated state of 'aloneness', *kaivalya*, need not denote either an ontological superiority of *purusha* or an exclusion of *prakriti*. *Kaivalya* can be positively construed as an integration of both principles—an integration or 'absolute oneness of life' that, I have argued, is what is most important for yoga. I have proposed that the *Yoga Sutra* does not uphold a 'path' of liberation that ultimately renders *purusha* and *prakriti* incapable of 'co-operating' together. Rather, the *Yoga Sutra* seeks to 'unite' these two principles without the presence of any defiled understanding, to bring them 'together' properly aligning them in a state of balance, harmony, and a clarity of knowledge in the integrity of being and action. Isolationism may not be and indeed does not seem to be the experience of those who have undertaken these practices at a deeper and mature level.

The purified mind, one that has been transformed through yogic discipline, is certainly no ordinary worldly awareness nor is it eliminated for the sake of pure consciousness. To confuse—as many interpretations of yoga have unfortunately done—the underlining purificatory processes involved in the cessation of ignorance or afflicted identity as being the same thing as, or as necessitating the need for, a radical elimination of our psychophysical being—the vehicle under the realm of prakriti through which consciousness discloses itself—is, I suggest, to misunderstand the intent of the *Yoga Sutra* itself. There are strong grounds for arguing, as I have attempted to show, that through ‘cessation,’ prakriti herself, in the form of the gunas that constitute the makeup of the yogi’s body-mind, is liberated from the grip of ignorance rooted in lower levels of consciousness or afflicted identity. Vyasa explicitly states³³ that emancipation happens in the mind and does not literally apply to purusha, which is by definition already free and therefore has no intrinsic need to be released from the fetters of the existence in samsara. The liberated one ‘realizes’ and thereby experiences, this freedom.

Both morality and perception or cognition are essential channels through which human consciousness, far from being negated or suppressed, is transformed and illuminated. The enhanced perception gained through yoga must be interwoven with yoga’s rich affective and moral dimensions to form a spirituality that does not become entangled in a web of antinomianism, but which retains the integrity and vitality to



transform our lives and the lives of others in an effective manner. In yoga proper there is no support, ethically or pedagogically, for the misappropriation or abuse of prakriti for the sake of freedom or purusha-realisation. By upholding an integration of the moral and the mystical, yoga supports a reconciliation of the prevalent tension within Hinduism between spiritual engagement and self-identity

within the world, *pravritti*, and spiritual disengagement from worldliness and self-identity that transcends the world, *nivritti*. Yoga discerns and teaches a balance between these two apparently conflicting orientations.

To be sure, the yogic path in all of its knowledge, power, and glory must be transcended. One must, as it were, step outside of the vehicle of prakriti and dwell as the consciousness of purusha in true form, *svarupa*. Yet I want to suggest that transcendence need not be taken to mean a ‘static finality’: abiding in non-afflicted, disengaged, formless, transcendent bliss severed from manifestation. Rather, more elliptically, Patanjali may well have set the stage for an inclusive awakening allowing for a convergence and engagement in the world, a ‘growing up’ in life with an integrity and fullness that perhaps knows no bounds. Now that, I would like to suggest, is a matured yoga, the possibility of which we must not overlook or close the door on.



Notes and References

1. An earlier version of this article has appeared as Ian Whicher, ‘Reflections on Liberated Consciousness’, *Thinking with the Yoga-Sutras*:

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2. See Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1980), 14, 56, 108; Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R Trask (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 94–5, 99–100; Gaspar M Koelman, *Pātanjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self* (Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum, 1970), 224, 251; Gerald J Larson and Ram S Bhattacharya, 'Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation', Karl H Potter, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 28 vols (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 12.13, who classifies Patanjali's yoga as a form of Sankhya.
 3. See, for example, Acharya Shankara's use of the word *vyavaharika*, the conventional empirical perspective, in contrast to *paramarthika*, the ultimate or absolute standpoint.
 4. Franklin Edgerton, 'The Meaning of Samkhya and Yoga', *American Journal of Philology*, 45/1 (1924); 1–46.
 5. As argued in *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*.
 6. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2: 'Yogash-chittavritti-nirodhah'. The modifications or functions, *vrittis*, of the mind, *chitta*, are said to be fivefold (*Yoga Sutra*, 1.6), namely, 'valid cognition', *pramana*—which includes perception, *pratyaksha*; inference, *anumana*; and valid testimony, *agama*—'error' or 'misconception', *viparyaya*; 'conceptualisation', *vikalpa*; 'sleep', *nidra*; and 'memory', *smriti*; and are described as being 'afflicted', *klishhta*; or 'non-afflicted', *aklishta* (*Yoga Sutra* 1.5). *Chitta* is an umbrella term that incorporates 'intellect', *buddhi*; 'sense of self', *ahamkara*; and 'mind-organ', *manas*; and can be viewed as the aggregate of the cognitive, conative, and affective processes and functions of phenomenal consciousness, that is, it consists of a grasping, intentional, and volitional consciousness. For an in-depth look at the meaning of the terms *chitta* and *vritti* see *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*. In the first four sutras of the first chapter, Samadhi-Pada, the subject matter of the *Yoga Sutra* is mentioned, defined, and characterised. The sutras run as follows:
- Yoga Sutra* 1.1: 'Now [begins] the discipline of yoga.' *Yoga Sutra* 1.2: 'Yoga is the cessation of [the misidentification with] the functioning or transformations of the mind.' *Yoga Sutra* 1.3: 'Then [when that cessation has taken place] there is abiding in the seer's own form (that is, purusha or intrinsic identity).' *Yoga Sutra* 1.4: 'Otherwise [there is] conformity to (that is, misidentification with) the functioning [of the mind]'; *Yoga Sutra* 1.1–4: 'Atha yoganushasanam; yogash-chitta-vritti-nirodhah; tada drashtuh-svarupe'vasthanam; vrittisarupeyam itaratra.' For a more comprehensive study of classical yoga including issues dealt with in this paper see *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*.
7. See *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*.
 8. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.15: 'Parinama-tapa-samskara-duhkhaih guna-vritti-virodhachcha dukkham-eva sarvam vivekinah; because of the dissatisfaction and sufferings due to change and anxieties and the latent impressions, and from the conflict of the transformations of the gunas, for the discerning one, all is sorrow alone.'
 9. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.16.
 10. Patanjali uses the term *pratiprasava* twice, in *Yoga Sutra* 2.10 and 4.34.
 11. Christopher K Chapple and Yogi Ananda Viraj (Eugene P Kelly, Jr), *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: An Analysis of the Sanskrit with Accompanying English Translation* (Delhi: Satguru, 1990), 60.
 12. Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation and Commentary* (Folkstone: Wm Dawson, 1979), 65.
 13. See Pandit Usharbudh Arya, *Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali with the Exposition of Vyāsa: A Translation and Commentary—Volume 1: Samādhi-Pāda* (Honesdale: Himalayan International Institute, 1986), 146, 471.
 14. The term *kaivalya* comes from *kevala*, meaning 'alone'. See *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation and Commentary*, 75, where Feuerstein also translates *kaivalya* as 'aloneness' but with a metaphysical or ontological emphasis that implies the absolute separation of purusha and prakriti.
 15. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.25: 'Tadabhavat samyoga-abhavo hanam taddrisheh kaivalyam.'
 16. See Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*, 2.18.
 17. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.20 and 4.18.

18. *Yoga Sutra*, 3.55: 'Sattva-purushayoh shuddhi-samyē kaivalyam iti; Liberation comes when parity between the physical world and the true self is attained.' One must be careful not to characterise the state of sattva itself as liberation or *kaivalya*, for without the presence of purusha, the mind, as reflected consciousness, could not function in its most transparent aspect as sattva. It is not accurate, according to yoga philosophy, to say that the sattva is equivalent to liberation itself. The question of the nature of the gunas from the enlightened perspective is an interesting one. In the Bhagavadgita 2.45, Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to become free from the three gunas and then gives further instructions to be established in eternal sattva—being-ness, light, goodness, clarity, and knowledge—free of dualities, free of acquisition and possession, Self-possessed, 'nirvandvo nityasattvastho nir-yogakshema atmavan'. It would appear from the above instructions that the nature of the sattva being referred to here transcends the limitations of the nature of sattva-guna, which can still have a binding effect in the form of attachment to joy and knowledge. It is, however, only by first overcoming rajas and tamas that liberation is possible.
19. See Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*, 3.55: 'na hi dagdha-klesha-bijasya jnane punarapeksha kachid-astī; when the seeds of afflictions have been scorched there is no longer any dependence at all on further knowledge.'
20. Hariharananda Aranya writes that in the state of *nirrodha*, the gunas 'do not die out but only the activity due to their non-equilibrium that was taking place on being overseen by Puruṣa ceases on account of the cessation of the cause (Avidyā or nescience) which brought about the contact with Puruṣa'. (Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali*, trans. P N Mukerji (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1963), 111).
21. In his *Yogavarttika*, Vijnanabhikshu insists that *kaivalya* is a state of liberation for both purusha and prakriti, each reaching its respective natural or intrinsic state. He then cites the *Sankhya Karika* (62), where it is stated that no purusha is bound, liberated, or transmigrates. It is only prakriti abiding in her various forms that transmigrates, is bound and becomes liberated. (See Vijnanabhikshu, *Yogavarttika*, 4.34. Also see *Yogavarttika of Vijñānabhikṣu: Text along with English Translation and Critical Notes along with the Text and English Translation of the Pātañjala Yogasūtras and Vyāsabhāṣya*, trans. T S Rukmani, 4 vols (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981–89)).
22. See *Yoga Sutra*, 2.29. Also see the discussion on ashtanga yoga in *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, chapter 4.
23. See Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*, 2.28.
24. 'Klesha-karma-nivritttau jivanneva vidvanvimukto bhavati. On the cessation of afflicted action, the knower is released while yet living.'
25. See *Yogavarttika*, 4.30. In his *Yoga-sara-samgraha*, Vijnanabhikshu tells us that the yogi 'established in the state of *dharmamegha-samadhi* is called a *jivanmukta*': '*Dharmameghah samadhih ... asyam-avasthayam jivanmukta ity-uchyate*'. Vijnanabhikshu is critical of Vedantins—that is, Acharya Shankara's Advaita Vedanta—who, he says, associate the *jivanmukta* with a little ignorance, *avidya-lesha*—probably because of the liberated being's continued link with the body—despite yoga's insistence on the complete overcoming of the afflictions.
26. This is the essence of Sri Krishna's teaching in the Gita on karma yoga. See, for example, Gita, 4.20.
27. See R C Zaehner, *Our Savage God* (London: Collins, 1974), 97–8.
28. See B A Scharfstein, *Mystical Experience* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), 131–2.
29. See *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation and Commentary*, 81.
30. See *Yoga Sutra*, 1.33: '*Maitri-karuna-muditopekshanam sukha-duhkha-punya-apunya-vishayanam bhavanatah chitta-prasadanam*; the mind is made pure and clear from the cultivation of friendliness, compassion, happiness, and equanimity in conditions or towards objects of joy, sorrow, merit, or demerit respectively.'
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The Difference in Traditional and Contemporary Meditative Pathways

J Shashi Kiran Reddy and Sisir Roy

MEDITATION AND YOGA have become so popular that we not only started devising new interventions based on these practices in the context of health and wellbeing, but in the process, we also deviated from the actual purpose and goals set by different traditions.¹ Numerous scientific studies have been conducted on different practices of meditation to study the efficacy and potential of these techniques. But, neglecting various aspects that are to be taken into consideration, most of these studies are aimed only at delineating the

underlying mechanisms of influence, thus, they involve various issues. Hence, the prime purpose of this paper is to shortlist a few issues in current meditation research and emphasise that meditation has a very deeper purpose and it is not a mere tool to heal nor for enhancing cognitive faculties. The essential message of the ancient traditions is lost and neglected by many present-day practitioners. Therefore, we summarise some obstacles that may surface from the contemporary versions of these practices.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda said: 'What we want are is Western science coupled with Vedanta.'² Many great spiritual teachers like Swamiji and Paramahansa Yogananda served as beacon lights by spreading the message of their masters and

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Vedanta to the world, especially in the West. Slowly, the spiritual traditions of the East like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen became popular endorsing various practices like yoga and different meditation techniques. Since many people who showed interest have invested their time in practising these techniques and claimed to derive various benefits essential for one's health and well-being, this raised interest in the scientific community to study if such claims are true.³ In this context, we now have hundreds of scientific studies on yoga and different practices of meditation.⁴ Here, not just a single technique associated with a particular tradition but a number of potential techniques spanning across various spiritual traditions have been explored.⁵ Such studies truly helped in understanding as to how these practices can support the enhancement of one's cognitive faculties and various other aspects towards wellbeing.

Recently, with the development of more and more sophisticated instrumentation and technologies, science ventured itself into studying and understanding the nature of consciousness. Until this time, the study of consciousness was considered as a philosophical, theosophical, and spiritual subject; though these means of study do not involve various empirical and objective modalities that we presently employ. From an experiential standpoint, one's consciousness seems to appear as a unitary phenomenon resulting from the integration of various sensory inputs associated with the different body components and their interaction with the surrounding environment. But, recently, in the context of consciousness, the main focus has been on studying the brain and its underlying mechanisms.⁶ This is because the brain is considered to be a vital organ and the centre regulating various functional aspects of both the body and the mind; starting from physiological functions of our body to the psychological makeup of our minds.

Since, a day-to-day living experience usually involves three different states of consciousness; wakefulness, dream-sleep—rapid eye movement (REM) sleep—and deep-sleep or non-REM sleep states, it is crucial to study these phenomenal states, in isolation and in relation to the other states, to understand the nature of one's consciousness. Thus, we had several experiments to study various neural mechanisms underlying these different states of consciousness.⁷ Following this, insights from meditation research is also being used to study the nature of consciousness through the three states of consciousness.⁸ In this regard, studies are being conducted to comprehend the experiences of meditation using the other three states of consciousness. In addition, the opposite has also been attempted; to study the degree and level of conscious awareness in different states of consciousness using distinct meditative levels and states.⁹ Having progressed on this line, science realised that it is fruitful not only to study the normal states of consciousness in a healthy subject, but also the perturbations in consciousness; the various altered states resulting from different health conditions and neural disorders.¹⁰ Studying such cases not only adds to our understanding of consciousness but also assists in devising various clinical interventions to help the subjects suffering from these disorders.

In the light of such studies and empirical proof that these practices truly help in the transformation of an individual, many started following these techniques and a greater number of people are now interested in learning these practices.¹¹ There is a large demand for a teacher or a place from where they can learn such practices. On the one hand, though it is good to know that many are interested in learning these practices, on the other, it is sad to see that, some individuals are trying to grab this interest and make use of the situation for their own benefits.¹² Meditation

retreats and anonymous centers started popping up everywhere. New types of contemporary practices and different meditation-based interventions are being developed on the traditional sources.¹³ These are introduced in order to serve various commercial purposes and to meet the expectations of people attending those retreats. We have preliminary evidence showing how some meditation techniques help in developing prosocial behaviors such as compassion and kindness towards others, and in different clinical conditions.¹⁴ In this context, it is truly important to use the potential of science in devising novel meditation-based practices and interventions to help people with such health conditions. But instead, they are developed for catching the demand and popularity of yoga and meditation; which is evident from practices like swimming yoga, aerial yoga, and some new age meditations. In this regard, the prime purpose of this paper is to shortlist a few issues in meditation research and emphasise that the purpose of meditation is not for material gains and cognitive enhancement alone, but for a higher purpose; which is generally neglected by many present-day practitioners.

Science, Traditional, and Contemporary Meditative Pathways

The major issue in studying consciousness is that one can subjectively understand it only through first-person accounts. There is a debate, regarding the translation of first-person subjective experiences to the objective standpoint of second and third-person accounts. Supporting such a view, some claim that we can never possibly understand the meditative states of experience in totality. Consequently, when we study various practices of meditation, we will just be able to note what happens when we adopt a specific technique; in terms of the influential physical mechanisms, and how such influences are different in

comparison to other techniques. But, we won't be capable of decoding at the subjective level the meditative state that will result as a consequence of practising a particular technique. However, we may have various such states of experiences leading to the ultimate state of meditation, as indicated by the traditions.

While it is doubtful if science can ever be able to capture such experiences in order to understand these practices, a few spiritual teachers like Swamiji supported the use of science. This shows that he never saw any contradiction between science and spirituality, and rather emphasised on the need for them to complement each other. A similar ideal has been set forth by His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama as well, on the role of science and the importance of conducting scientific experiments on spiritual practices: 'If scientific analysis were conclusively to demonstrate certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims.'¹⁵

Here, we have two important things to note when we intend to study these practices. One is the technique which an individual follows and practices, and the other is the state of experience associated with the practice.¹⁶ Sometimes, each technique may be intended or aimed at reaching a particular state of experience, but how and when an individual or a spiritual seeker will attain this state is unique and depends on that individual. This is because, it depends on various factors such as genetic predisposition, life experiences, environmental factors, brain structure, and the individual differences in personality. Taking these into account, there is also an issue in meditation research as to how they compare different individual subjects following the same meditation technique. Considering various aspects on which a person's progress depends on meditation, the time in between the inception of the practice

and the attainment of a final state—which they consider to be the ultimate aim—is comprised of various stages of meditation. These stages can either be in terms of the subjective advancements; where one evolves further following the same specific technique, or a seeker is given a different technique altogether to practice, once she or he demonstrates a particular mastery over the previous technique. There is a possibility that some techniques are devised in a step-wise manner and a seeker mastering each and every technique slowly progresses towards the ultimate goal set by the respective tradition. At each step, as the practice matures, one moves from one state of experience to the other, forming different stages of meditation. Such stages are even mentioned and discussed in detail in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, the spiritual repository of yoga and meditation.¹⁷

In the context of scientific studies, as of today, we have been able only to understand the neural mechanisms underlying different practices of meditation across traditions, but not about the stages of meditation. This is because, at any given time, we are only comparing subjects based on the meditation technique and the number of years of experience. For a detailed analysis of the different stages of meditation, we need studies that trace a novice from the inception of her or his practice until some mastery is gained over the technique. Then a comparison between different subjects should be made to study the efficacy of a specific technique. Even when we normalise all these issues and estimate a proper baseline for comparing subjects in meditation research, still we are not certain, if science will ever be able to indicate the live experience of a person in meditation, in terms of the spiritual states of consciousness, because spiritual traditions often talk and indicate a state of no-experience as one of the highest states of meditative experience.¹⁸ So, considering the complications involved in objectifying the first-person

accounts; how to explain or comprehend the state of no-experience devoid of thoughts, is a big challenge. This is because, now or later, as we progress in meditation research, we are bound to come across the possibility of this state.

As contemporaries view, ancient cultures have devised various practices and techniques like yoga and meditation not only for one's holistic wellbeing; which involves both the physical and psychological aspects, but also to attain a higher state of consciousness. Moreover, as discussed above, they also indicated that there exists a different state of consciousness called *turiya*, which occurs beyond and underlies the known three states of consciousness.¹⁹ Since this is known to be a higher form of consciousness functioning above the other three states, it is also termed as the fourth state of consciousness. Unlike the other three states of consciousness, this state is supposed to be free from any phenomenal content, and hence, it is also referred to as pure consciousness, the content-free consciousness, silent consciousness, or a state of no-experience.²⁰ Although, this state of consciousness is far from the reach of our present understanding of consciousness, recently, a few attempted to study the possible existence of this state using scientific modalities. Studying this state and its relation to the other known states of consciousness may offer new insights into the nature of our consciousness. Knowledge regarding this state may also be useful in understanding various perturbations in consciousness and different clinical disorders of consciousness.

In addition, here we summarise, some contemporary views and the current status of these ancient practices that have been devised to attain the pinnacle of our potential nature of being.

The Role of a Teacher or Guru

Sri Ramakrishna was once asked: 'Is spiritual knowledge impossible without a guru?' He

replied: 'Satchidananda alone is the Guru. If a man in the form of a guru awakens spiritual consciousness in you, then know for certain that it is God the Absolute who has assumed that human form for your sake.'²¹

The role of a teacher or a guru has been emphasised so much in various spiritual traditions. Even in the ancient days, it was never so easy for a teacher to accept a disciple. Highly evolved spiritual teachers used to test their students for earnestness and dedication towards learning spiritual practices, and based on many other aspects, they used to consider them as their disciples. There is a strong notion that a teacher oneself should have followed the path and attained the goal of self-realisation, and only then, on the command from their own gurus, they used to start preaching or teaching others. We have many self-realised masters, as per their guru's instructions, who kept silent and never sought to instruct others. Swamiji said: 'Anyone and everyone cannot be an Acharya (teacher of mankind), but many may become Mukta (liberated).'22

Knowing the current status and demand for these practices, meditators who practised a technique for a few years just for the sake of becoming a certified teacher are setting up their own meditation ventures and retreats. They themselves have not achieved the ultimate goal of meditation and are not experienced after a particular stage, and so how can they lead students or practitioners to the goal? This is very important to consider, because, it is not always that the meditation practices are beneficial. Since how an individual responds to a particular practice of meditation is unique and depends on various factors as we have mentioned previously, some techniques may harm them more than being helpful. In addition to this, even inner motivation and intention of an aspirant matters much. In this regard, we want to emphasise the need to choose a right teacher and

place for practising these techniques, and not to become victims of the so-called teachers involved in the commercialisation of these sacred practices. Swamiji said: 'The Guru must teach me and lead me into the light, make me a link in that chain of which he himself is a link. The man in the street cannot claim to be a Guru. The Guru must be a man who has known, has actually realised the Divine truth, has perceived himself as the spirit. A mere talker cannot be the Guru' (8.115).

In the scientific studies of meditation, there seems to be some discrepancy in the participation of a spiritual teacher or practitioner oneself as a co-author of the study. One group suggests that a scientific researcher must have practised and experienced different states of meditation before designing and conducting a study to understand meditation. This is because, having known the difficulty in translating the first-person experiences, only a person with such experiences comes close to any description of the states they experience as a result of meditation. This way they can develop the right methodologies to study and analyse meditation. On the other hand, some report different biases that could possibly surface with the involvement of a person or teacher of the group who practises a particular technique. Themselves being part of the study, they may try to promote her or his meditation practices. So, when we try to study meditation truly using scientific or objective means, we need to set up a balance between these two views.

Accompanying Processes in the Path of Meditation

Here, the main focus is to understand, what makes a meditation practice complete? Whether what we are discussing as different meditation techniques are complete practices not needing any supplementary practices or whether they have to be combined or practised in association with some other practices? In science, when

studying the efficacy of meditation, one comes across various practices associated with different traditions. It is not that each tradition involves or prescribes only one type of practice. Most of the traditions suggest multiple techniques to follow. When studying such techniques, science usually considers them to be complete techniques by themselves. But, we have several instances where gurus and spiritual masters suggest and emphasise different techniques for initial and advanced seekers.²³ This shows that they are not complete by itself, either they are part of the step-wise process towards a particular desired state or they need to be supplemented with other things.

For instance, when we consider mindfulness meditation, there is a possibility that it can lead to a wrong form of mindfulness if not combined with ethical and moral teachings.²⁴ So, when we intend to understand meditation in a holistic sense, one should also take into consideration these other matters. Since it is central to have a right motivation for an action, meditation should not be treated as a mere practice. As part of the preparatory process, it also involves psychological makeup in the form of spiritual teachings and moral instructions. This is one reason as to why even Buddhist monks spend a considerable amount of time in preparing themselves for the meditation practices. Though, under the umbrella of a right guru, a student need not worry about these things, because the teacher will take care of all the aspects which are essential for the student's spiritual progress and development.

Obstacles in the Path of Meditation


There has also been a great deal of emphasis on the possible obstacles or dangers in one's spiritual progress. Traditions warn and caution on several occasions that one may develop an ego or anti-prosocial like behaviours, as one progresses along the path of meditation. This, in scientific

terms, can be attributed to the development and enhancement of various cognitive faculties after evolving to a particular stage of meditation. Current scientific studies also support the idea that when practising these techniques, one has a greater scope of developing or enhancing these abilities.²⁵ On the development of these potential abilities, one may start to think of themselves as superior to others; this might reflect in their behaviour and day-to-day activities. Spiritual masters severely warned against such things and indicated that it is obvious that an individual would start acquiring such capabilities, but if they start giving importance to them and get caught up there, slowly they will deviate from the actual goal of meditation and they will never be able to attain the ultimate state. They emphasised that one's aim should be to recognise and experience the nature of one's own consciousness and the self.

Conclusion

Science, not considering all the above-mentioned aspects, is just focussed on studying mere techniques and mental practices of meditation. One has to see how science will accommodate all these crucial aspects into its meditation studies. All-in-all, though we support the development of different interventions and use of meditation practices for different health conditions, we warn regarding the ill-use of these practices. Meditation is not just a mere tool to heal or bring about one's wellbeing, but it has a very deeper purpose. We suggest that contemporary practitioners should study and understand the essential purpose of meditation before getting initiated into a practice and choose a right teacher, who can help on the path of meditation.

Meditation research is central in order to get new insights into our current understanding of consciousness. In this respect, it is important for science to look for the possible existence of a

state like *turiya*, which is known to underlie the other three states of awareness. Such an exploration can be initiated not only in the context of meditation research, but also from various indications given in the traditional literature. This state is known to subsist between the other three states of consciousness. Therefore, studying the moments in between the other states of consciousness, like the time in-between the onset of sleep and wakefulness, can throw some light on this state and the nature of our self. 

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Reflections on the Puranic Maha-yogi

David Gordon White

mind, *manas*, is higher than the senses, Being, *sattva*, higher than the mind. The great self, *mahan-atma*, is above Being, the unmanifested, *avyakta*, is higher than the great [self]. Above the unmanifested is the person, *purusha*, pervading and without mark, knowing which, a being is liberated and reaches immortality.¹

The same set of verses is found in two places in the *Katha Upanishad*, with the second leading directly into a discussion of yoga, likely the earliest mention of the term in the Upanishadic corpus: ‘When the five senses of knowing cease, together with the mind and the intelligence, *buddhi*, does not stir, they call that the highest bourn, *paramam padam*. This steadfast control of the senses is known as “yoga”, for yoga is the origin and the passing away’ (2.3.10–11).

I will return to the meaning of the term *mahan atma* later in this study. Here, however, I wish first to continue my discussion of the Upanishadic origins of Puranic cosmogony and cosmology. Briefly stated, the supreme *purusha* of the *Katha Upanishad* becomes transformed into a ‘great yogi’, *maha-yogi*, who, in the earliest Puranic accounts of this cosmogonic process, is further identified with the supreme god Vishnu, also known as Narayana. In the ‘primary creation’ that generates the cosmic egg at the beginning of a *maha-kalpa*, it is through yogic practice—as opposed to sacrifice, which, following the Vedic cosmogonic paradigm, undergirds the Puranic ‘secondary creation’ at the beginning

IN THE COSMOGONIES of the early *Vayu Purana* and *Vishnu Purana*, both the temporal cycles of the *kalpas* and *maha-kalpas* and the spatial structure of the cosmic egg are patterned after the stages of meditative ascent undergone by the practitioner of yoga as described in the *Prashna* and *Katha Upanishads*. This latter Upanishad is significant inasmuch as it contains an early adumbration of the Sankhya *tattvas*, which are presented as a hierarchy: ‘The

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of a kalpa—that god, who is both the supreme person, *purushottama*, and a great yogi, generates the universe through his emission, *srishti*—of the *tattvas*, which serially devolve into the cosmic egg, our universe. At the end of a *maha-kalpa*, the same great yogi, Vishnu-Narayana, reabsorbs the universe, through the hierarchy of the *tattvas* back into his cosmic person, such that throughout the cosmic night that follows the cosmic dissolution, *pralaya*, nothing remains but the *maha-yogi* himself. Madeleine Biardeau, the scholar who first detailed the parallels between the yoga of the *Katha Upanishad* and *Prashna Upanishad* and the meditative process of Puranic cosmogony, and who was one of my Paris mentors, describes the process in the following terms:

The Purusha is himself a cosmic yogin, a *maha-yogi*, who, like the human yogi, causes the universe to unfold around him by turning his senses outward. This movement toward universal emission—at the end of which one finds the Purusha ensconced once again within the cosmic egg; that is, concealed within that point which is the most inaccessible to the senses—triggers the reverse process of reabsorption analogous to that by which a yogi retracts his senses from the outside world, thereby drawing himself into his true center; that is, into that space where all ‘individuality’ has disappeared. In effect, the Puranas represent *prakriti-pralaya* [the reabsorption of the material universe] as the perfect mirror image of the *prakriti-sarga* [the emission of the material universe], with this dual process endlessly repeating itself; and so it is that the Purusha, together with the *pradhana*, is called *prabhavapyaya*, ‘the origin and the passing away’ of the universe, in the same way that yoga is itself defined in the *Katha Upanishad* as *prabhavapyaya*, ‘origin and passing away.’²

This analysis nonetheless gives rise to a number of questions, many of which Biardeau poses to herself and her readers in the many pages of

her densely written study. Prominent among these is the identity of the great yogi, who generates the cosmic cycles through his yoga. The earliest attestation of the term *maha-yogi* is found in the Mahabharata, the massive epic whose compilation falls between the period of middle Upanishads like the *Katha Upanishad* and that of such early Puranas as the *Vayu Purana*. The term is employed perhaps a dozen times in the Mahabharata itself, with the sole mythic narrative involving a *maha-yogi*, actually, two *maha-yogis*, appearing in c. fourth century CE, ‘Mokshadharma Parva’ of the epic’s twelfth book. In this account, the *maha-yogis*, who are pitted against one another are Kavya Ushanas, the *purohita*, priest, of the *daityas*, demons, and the supreme god Shiva. After Kavya Ushanas has forcefully entered the body of Kubera and plundered his wealth, the disconsolate god appeals to Shiva: ‘Now that I have been besieged by the yogic self, *yogatmakena*, of Ushanas, my wealth is gone, and that great ascetic has made off on a path of his own yogic making.’³ Shiva eventually spears his rival *maha-yogi* on his pike, *shula*, and tosses him into his mouth. Then, ‘the mighty Ushanas entered [into] Maheshvara’s stomach, and ... moved around there’ (12.278.18–20). By virtue of his own great yogic power, he is able to survive the fiery energy of Shiva’s *tapas*, austerities, but, feeling the heat, he implores the god to release him. This Shiva does, ejaculating him as a drop of semen, whence Kavya Ushanas’s well-known sobriquet of *shukra*, a term that means ‘semen’, but which is also the name of the planet Venus, for which this myth is an etymological explanation.

This epic account of two great yogis brings us up short, because it is clear that neither of the two is practising yoga in the sense of postures, breath control, sensory introversion, or meditative ascent through the Sankhya *tattvas*. In

the case of Kavya Ushanas at least, yoga appears to have more to do with injecting himself into another creature's body, a strategy that works with Kubera, a non-yogi, but that fails with Shiva, another *maha*-yogi. In fact, every one of the four mythic accounts of individuals identified as yogis in the Mahabharata describes their yoga in the same terms as that of the *maha*-yogi Kavya Ushanas: that is, as the, usually, forceful penetration of another creature's body.⁴ This is also the defining feature of the yoga practised by the countless yogis of later myth from the medieval, pre-colonial, and colonial periods, ranging from the *Bhagavadajjukiya*,⁵ a seventh-century south Indian farce to the mid-twentieth-century chapbook story of 'Bhairavanand Yogi' (1–4). The same scenario is also found in the *Maitri Upanishad*—a work that was likely coeval with the books of the Mahabharata in which stories of yogis are found—in which a sage named Shakayanya penetrates the body of a king to initiate him into the secrets of yoga from within the latter's heart.⁶

Undoubtedly, the best-known divine yogi of epic mythology is the *purushottama* Sri Krishna himself, who, at the conclusion of his teachings to Arjuna on yoga in the Bhagavadgita, demonstrates his 'masterful yoga', *yogam aishvaram*, by revealing his universal form, *vishvarupa*, as he shows his to be a body which, coterminous with the entire cosmos, both contains and is simultaneously present in—or as—every creature in the universe.⁷ Throughout this chapter, Arjuna refers to the god not as a *maha*-yogi but rather as a *yogeshvara*, a 'master of yoga', but in it we see Sri Krishna doing the same things that yogis and *maha*-yogis do in other epic narratives: swallowing and injecting himself into the bodies of creatures. Indeed, in another passage from the epic's sixth book, the fact that the *yogeshvara* Krishna's 'masterful yoga' is based on a human

prototype is stated explicitly: 'People who are of an ignorant, deluded nature confuse Vasudeva with a self-magnifying yogi, who has penetrated a human body.'⁸

Entitled 'The Knowers of Yoga', chapter 289 of the Mahabharata's twelfth book comprises an analytical description of the 'masterful yoga' of master, *ishvara*, yogis:

Yogis who are without restraints [and] endowed with the power of yoga, *yogabalanvita*, are [so many] masters, *ishvarah*, who enter into [the bodies of] the Prajapatis, the sages, the gods, and the great beings. Yama, raging Antaka, and death of terrible prowess: none of these masters are the yogi, who is possessed of immeasurable splendour ... A yogi can lay hold of several thousand selves, and having obtained [their] power, can walk the earth with all of them. The yogi can obtain [for oneself] the [realms of the] sense objects. Otherwise, the yogi can undertake terrible austerities, or, again, can draw those [sense objects] back together [into oneself], like the sun [does] its rays of light.⁹

Entering into other bodies in order to control them, or drawing the powers of those bodies into oneself to increase one's own powers: these are the hallmarks of the epic yogi's yoga. In the light of these data, then, the question that must be posed is: what is the nature of the yoga of the Puranic *maha*-yogi? The final verses of this same epic chapter portray the culmination of the yogi's practice, which is at once an ascent through the *tattvas* to the highest path, a penetration into every entity in the universe, and an identification with Narayana:

When one's self-magnifying self, *mahan-atma*, and the magni-ficent, *mahan*, [universe] have fused into one another, a yogi may enter [into] women, men and the assemblies of Gandharvas, the quarters of the sky, the hosts of Yakshas, the mountains and the serpents, and the clouds

together with the forests and all the rivers, and the terrible oceans and all the mountain peaks, and the ancestors and serpents and all the divinities, [and] verily the immaculate overlord of men together with the stars ... [the elements of earth, fire and water], and supreme Nature, prakriti, [together with the three gunas] and the six high-minded sons of Brahma and the six-faced [Skanda-Kartikeya] and Dharma and Bhava and the boon-granting Vishnu, Brahma the master and ... indeed *That*, the magni-ficent highest Brahman. One is liberated shortly thereafter ... Surpassing all mortal yogis, the [master] yogi—whose body is the magni-ficent [universe] and whose self is Narayana—acts (12.289,58–62).

This rise through the Indian chain of being that is simultaneously a realisation of one's identity with the whole of Being revisits a conundrum introduced in the Upanishads, which proposed the same two incompatible models of transcendence. That conundrum may be phrased as follows: how can a virtually liberated being rise up out of oneself all the while knowing that there is nothing outside of oneself?¹⁰ While the Upanishads do not offer a solution, passages like this one do so, in no small part through the use of the term *mahan atma*, which I have translated here as '(self)-magnifying self'. As the nominative singular of the present active participle of *mah*, a verb root which from the epic period forward carried the sense of 'magnify', *mahan* may be literally translated as 'magnifying'. It is the cognate of the Greek *megas*, the Latin *magnum*, and the English *much*. Combined with *atman*, *mahan* must be read in this context as the '(self)-magnifying self', in other words, a self whose quality of expansiveness empowers it to become coterminous with the entire magnified or magni-ficent universe, *mahan*, or the neuter form *mahat*.¹¹ *Mahan atma* is, of course, the term for the third Sankhya *tattva* as enumerated in *Katha Upanishad*, 1.3.10–11 and KU 3.10–11 and 2.3.7–8.

It is also, I would argue, the source of the name of *maharloka*, the fourth of the seven worlds of Puranic cosmology, a world whose ambiguity—an entirely appropriate term in this context—was noted and discussed by Biardeau in several pages in her study,¹² noting that 'the *Vishnu* [Purana] explains *pralaya* as the result of Vishnu's desire to draw into himself all of the creatures in the universe. It concludes its account by showing that Vasudeva has become the *mahan atma*.'¹³

If, as is clearly shown to be the case in the epic passage I quoted a moment ago, the goal of human yogis was to realise a universal body like that of the supreme person, Vishnu-Narayana, then the world to which such beings ascend at the end of a kalpa would have to be one that encompasses the triple world below it, yet which is also situated spatially below the fifth world of rebirth, *janarloka*, and the two worlds of release from rebirth and absorption into the absolute godhead through renunciation, *tapoloka* and *brahmaloka*. In my opinion, it is only because she equated 'yoga' with 'renunciation' that Biardeau failed to grasp this distinction and solve for herself the significance of the name and location of this fourth world. In fact, there exists a wealth of data, from both philosophical and mythological sources, that further support my hypothesis. Here, I am thinking in particular of the prakriti-*layas*, a term found in yoga philosophy to denote those practitioners who choose, at the culmination of their practice, to remain absorbed in the material world, prakriti, in a state 'like liberation', as opposed to the superior state of disembodied, *videha*, liberation. This vision, of a 'two-tiered cosmography of salvation', which locates embodied yogis below fully realised disembodied seekers of liberation, *mumukshus*, is one that recurs throughout later Hindu soteriology, both Puranic and Tantric.¹⁴

Its philosophical foundations are the subject of a recent masterful study by Angelika Malinar.¹⁵


An issue that remains to be resolved is the depiction in the Puranas of the *maha-yogi* Vishnu as falling into a 'yogic sleep', *yoga-nidra*, when he reabsorbs the worlds at the end of a kalpa or *maha-kalpa*. Of course this is what Puranic mythology and medieval iconography depict when they portray the god lying on his serpent couch in the midst of the ocean of cosmic dissolution. The relationship between Vishnu's yoga as meditative ascent and the state of sleep is clear enough here: already in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the state of deep sleep, *sushupti*, is one in which the 'the person made of knowledge, *vijñanamayah* purusha, moves along the seventy-two thousand channels ... and through them reaches ... the citadel of the heart'.¹⁶ However, as Biarreau herself notes, 'while the meditative trance of the Puranic *maha-yogi* may be a type of sleep, it cannot be identified with the state known as "unsupported", *nirvikalpa* samadhi'.¹⁷

It is only in certain Vaishnava Puranas that the *maha-yogi* is described as entering into a state of yogic sleep to reabsorb the same universe that he had emitted at the beginning of a *maha-kalpa*. However, in the Shaiva Puranas, the *yogeshvara* Shiva achieves the same result through dance rather than sleep. One may therefore conclude that a *maha-yogi*'s practice of yoga at the end of time need not require 'sleep'. But what of the compound *yoga-nidra* itself, which appears in a number of Vaishnava Puranas to denote Vishnu's yoga? Biarreau maintains that this is a mythologisation of the state of 'supported', *savikalpa* samadhi, in which a divine yogi in deep meditation retains certain mental formations because, 'one must not lose all trace of the differentiated world while one is asleep' (75).

A 1999 article by André Couture, which takes up the question of the name of *Yoganidra*, the

goddess who figures so prominently in the *Hari-vamsha* account of the birth of Sri Krishna, discusses this compound in a new light by setting it against the backdrop of ancient Indian realpolitik.¹⁸ Couture's contention is that the term does not refer to yogic practice, but rather to the practice of 'fake' or feigned sleep as a ruse to overcome one's adversary (35). Without entering into the details of Couture's argument, it suffices to say here that it turns on the frequent use of the term 'yoga' in Sanskrit parlance to mean 'stratagem' or 'subterfuge'. This is clearly the case in a passage from the Mahabharata's twelfth book, which evokes Sri Krishna's use of sleep as a stratagem, yoga, for spreading his maya (37–8).¹⁹ Here, it is worth noting that the earliest attestations of this compound transpose its two members to *nidra-yoga*—'the stratagem of sleep'—rather than *yoga-nidra*.²⁰ This is a stratagem especially recommended to the person of the king, who is urged to 'sleep wakefully', *shayanam yoganidraya*, both because his enemies may attack him at any moment, and because he may use their sleep against them to launch a sneak attack on them.²¹ In both its twelfth book and in the Gita, the Mahabharata further extends this stratagem of sleep to yogis and hermits.²² Furthermore, as R P Kangle and others have noted with reference to the *Arthashastra*, 'yoga refers to the secret methods used to do away with undesirables, particularly the use of weapons, poison, etc'. As such, the term *yoga-purusha* in this source signifies a spy who uses the guise of a yogi as his cover.²³ In this light, the *yoga-nidra* of the *maha-yogi* may be closer to the various subterfuges employed by 'sinister yogis' for their own self-aggrandisement than to any sort of meditative trance. The divine *maha-yogi* tricks the world and all its creatures into being swallowed by him.

But one need not see this as an either/or proposition. I would rather suggest that the

Puranic compilers were referring not only to the yoga of meditation introduced in the Upanishads and yoga philosophy, but also to the widely known activities of the people called yogis, whose yoga had nothing to do with meditation. Just as they were able to 'recycle' the old Vedic paradigm of creation through sacrifice into their account of the 'secondary cosmogony', regulated by the god Brahma, so too, they found a way to retain the multiple senses of the terms 'yoga' and 'yogi', that were in vogue at the time. As such, my reflections in no way undermine Biardeau's groundbreaking discoveries: rather, they complement them. The phases of Puranic cosmogony are still governed by the practice of a divine *maha-yogi*; however, his practice is not limited to a form of meditation that is the 'origin and the passing away' of the universe. Rather, it also informed by epic and Puranic understandings of yoga practice—or perhaps more properly speaking, of 'yogi practice'—which comprised not only mystic ascent, but also the physical penetration, through subterfuge, of every body in the universe, and ultimately of the universe in its entirety. 

Notes and References

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2. Madeleine Biardeau, 'Études de Mythologie Hindoue: I—Cosmogonies Puraniques', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 54 (1968), 19–45; 39.
3. Mahabharata, 12.278.12.
4. See David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 141–51.
5. See *Bhagavadajjukya* 27–33, summarised in *Sinister Yogis*, 31–3.
6. See *Maitri Upanishad*, 6.29–30.
7. See Gita, 11.5–8. See Angelika Malinar, *The Bhagavadgita: Doctrines and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 146–8, 156–63.
8. Mahabharata, 6.62.20, quoted in *The Bhagavadgita: Doctrines and Contexts*, 151. I have slightly altered Malinar's translation.
9. Mahabharata 12.289.24–7.
10. See 'Études de Mythologie Hindoue: I—Cosmogonies Puraniques', 69–70.
11. James Fitzgerald argues for a similar reading of the term here. The same would apply to the term *mahatman* when it is applied to a yogi in these contexts. See James Fitzgerald, 'The Samkhya-Yoga "Manifesto" at Mahabharata 12.289–290', *Battles, Bards, Brahmins: Papers from the Epics Section of the 13th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. John Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012), 185–212; 199.
12. See Madeleine Biardeau, 'Études de Mythologie Hindoue: III—Cosmogonies Puraniques (suite)', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 58 (1971), 17–89; 38–44.
13. *Vayu Purana*, 6.3.16, cited in *Études de Mythologie Hindoue: III—Cosmogonies Puraniques (suite)*, 41.
14. See *Sinister Yogis*, 99–114.
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16. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.1.19.
17. Madeleine Biardeau, 'Études de Mythologie Hindoue: II—Cosmogonies Puraniques (suite)', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 55 (1969), 59–105; 74.
18. See André Couture, 'The Problem of the Meaning of Yoganidra's Name', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 27 (1999), 35–47.
19. Mahabharata, 12.47.30, 12.47.76, 12.47.47–8.
20. Noted in 'Études de Mythologie Hindoue: II—Cosmogonies Puraniques (suite)', 75; and 'The Problem of the Meaning of Yoganidra's Name', 38–9.
21. *Hitopadesha*, 3.75, cited in 'The Problem of the Meaning of Yoganidra's Name', 42.
22. See Mahabharata, 12.47.35 and Gita 2.69.
23. R P Kangle, *The Kautilyan Arthashastra*, 2 vols (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1986), 2.39, cited in 'The Problem of the Meaning of Yoganidra's Name', 45.



Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya on Patanjali's Yoga

Daniel Raveh

KRISHNACHANDRA BHATTACHARYYA (1875–1949) is considered by many as the founding father of contemporary Indian philosophy.¹ Using Western tools and writing in English—as he himself admits and to some extent regrets in his acclaimed lecture ‘Svaraj in Ideas’, presented at the Hooghly College in the late 1920s—he reflected upon classical Indian philosophy and modern European philosophy. At the Indian end of the scale, he concentrates on Advaita Vedanta, Sankhya, Patanjali’s yoga, Jainism, and the rasa theory of aesthetics. At the Western end, Bhattacharyya offers an analysis of Kant and Hegel, and moreover, ‘Indian solutions to Western problems’ as Jay Garfield and A Raghuramaraju demonstrate.² On top of his studies in classical Indian philosophy and German Idealism, Bhattacharyya is also the author of independent writings, an exercise in ‘fusion philosophy’, or ‘comparative philosophy without borders’, if I may borrow this phrase from Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber.³ Most famous among Bhattacharyya’s independent writings are his essays, ‘The Place of the Indefinite in Logic’ (1916), ‘The Subject as Freedom’ (1930), ‘The Concept of the Absolute and its

Alternative Forms’ (1934), and ‘The Concept of Philosophy’ (1936).

Bhattacharyya’s work, at both ends of the scale, and between these two ends, is both pioneering and creative, and invites close scrutiny. However, not much, and certainly not enough has been done in this direction, perhaps owing to his synoptic, ultra-condensed style of writing. It often seems to me that Bhattacharyya adopted the classical sutra style of philosophising, ‘translating’ this unique form of expression from Sanskrit to English.

Drawing on the Bhagavadgita on the one hand, and on Kant’s three Critiques on the other, Bhattacharyya perceives the human consciousness as made of three main domains, namely the domains of knowledge, action or willing, and emotion. His philosophical investigation, as I read him, attempts to conceptualise the notion of freedom in each of these complementing domains. Bhattacharyya discusses freedom at the level of knowledge through Advaita Vedanta—or ‘Vedantism’, as he puts it, with special reference to Acharya Shankara—and Sankhya philosophy. On freedom at the emotive level he writes through the theory of rasa, in his intriguing essay ‘The Concept of Rasa’. And on freedom in action or willing, he writes through Patanjali’s yoga and Kant. Yes, Patanjali and Kant in the same boat, in Bhattacharyya’s formulation. I will elaborate on ‘willing’ in Patanjali as we move on.

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I made a distinction between Bhattacharyya's 'studies' and his 'independent writings'. But it should be noted that his 'studies' are also very 'independent'. When I use the notion of independence with reference to Bhattacharyya's work, the title of his talk 'Svaraj in Ideas' comes to mind, but not just in the sense of decolonising the 'shadow mind', imitative rather than independent, that years of colonial subordination have produced; but also in the sense of thinking anew, afresh, rather than repeating that which has already been written and said on whatever subject one writes about. In a letter to a colleague, dated January 2005, Daya Krishna, philosopher extraordinaire and epitome of independent thinking himself, writes: 'The ghost of the schools seems to overpower us so much that we forget the 'problem', and talk only of what the Nyaya said, or the Sankhya, or the Buddhist, or the Advaitin. It is reporting of the worst kind. It may show knowledge of the text, but not that one has philosophically thought about it.'⁴

Svaraj in ideas, then, not just in the sense of 'intellectual decolonisation', but in the broader sense of transgressing axiomatic thinking patterns. For Daya Krishna, 'thinking' is the antonym of 'reporting' or 'repeating'. And his antonym for Bhattacharyya's 'shadow mind'—that in 'Svaraj in Ideas' goes hand in hand with 'soulless thinking', is *nihsanga-buddhi*, which is the equivalent, at the domain of knowledge, of the Gita's ideal of *nishkama*-karma. For Daya Krishna, *nihsanga-buddhi* is not just 'unattached mind'; it is the name given by him to a reading approach that aims at establishing a dialogue between the reader and the text. The point is that in a dialogue, direct, intimate, such as the one envisioned by Daya Krishna, both parties affect one another. I quote from another letter dated April 2005, where he explains:

Perhaps we could think of Kant in another way, not as a philosopher to be 'understood' by other thinkers in the last two hundred years, but as a starting point for carrying the Kantian enterprise further. This can be done in the context of other philosophers also, instead of wasting time in 'understanding' what they 'really' said. We might profit from their insights, and carry them further to the best of our ability. This would bring diverse and multiple aspects of a thinker to our notice which seldom are seen, and other strains which exist only as a tendency in his thought.

Daya Krishna's vision of reading as thinking with, and from, takes me to Gopinath Bhattacharyya's introduction to Bhattacharyya's collected writings. Gopinath, editor of this collection and prominent thinker in his own right, explains that his father's method of philosophising 'is one of constructive interpretation'.⁵ He further writes, almost apologising for Bhattacharyya's 'unusual' work, that it is 'much more of construction than of interpretation', and in fact a 'speculative reconstruction based on a few pivotal tenets rather than an objective exposition'. 'This method,' he adds, 'is apparently a risky one'. And he drives his point home, suggesting that, 'Much of what Bhattacharyya has said of Vedanta, Samkhya and Yoga is not to be found in the extant original literature on these subjects. It is an extension or a development in new directions. ... it is the discovery of new potentialities' (xix-xx).

This paragraph, if read unapologetically, namely as a description or even prescription of creative thinking, is in tune with Daya Krishna, who speaks about reading-thinking—reading as a mode of thinking—that reveals 'strains which exist only as a tendency' in a thinker or a text. If Gopinath Bhattacharyya is ambivalent with regard to his father's 'creativity', then for Daya Krishna, this is exactly how philosophy should be done.

As suggested above, not enough has been

written on Bhattacharyya's philosophy. On his 'Studies in Yoga Philosophy', hardly anything has been written. Is it because the *Yoga Sutra*, a treatise on meditation, does not seem 'philosophical enough', hence not worthy of philosophical analysis? I would like to suggest that the *Yoga Sutra*, even though aiming at a metaphysical horizon beyond language and temporality, consists of hard-core philosophical strands, and contributes to the perennial philosophical investigation about the limits of language, the intricate nature of time, freedom as concept and ideal, and of course, the ever-pending question of identity and self.

I would like to further suggest that 'Studies in Yoga Philosophy' is a significant chapter of Bhattacharyya's corpus. It works in two directions. First, it sheds new light on the *Yoga Sutra* and its commentarial body. In his paper, 'Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary', Jonardon Ganeri explains that 'a successful philosophical commentary helps its target audience to read philosophically the text being commented upon, and mediates between the text and a given readership'.⁶

Bhattacharyya does not write in Sanskrit, but is deeply rooted in sutra and commentary, thinks through pivotal Sanskrit notions, and often highlights concepts and phrases hardly touched by his predecessors. There is something of the classical commentator in Bhattacharyya on yoga. As in Ganeri, he reads and enables his readers to join him in reading the text philosophically. Moreover, like his classical predecessors, Bhattacharyya uses the source-text as a platform to develop themes close to his heart, and primarily freedom in and through willing. Second, Bhattacharyya's 'Studies in Yoga Philosophy' is worth looking into, since it sheds light not just on the *Yoga Sutra*, but also on his own broader philosophical project. Daya Krishna refers to Bhattacharyya as 'the most outstanding philosopher

that India has produced in the 20th century'.⁷ This is no empty compliment, as the next segment, 'Daya Krishna on Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya', will indicate. Understanding Bhattacharyya's project is crucial if one is interested in understanding contemporary Indian philosophy as a distinct genre of philosophy, which draws on classical Indian materials and 'carries them forward', apropos Daya Krishna, in correspondence with other traditions of thinking, and primarily the European, or now Western thinking tradition, or traditions in the plural.

But the present canvas is not broad enough to enable me to offer a comprehensive reading of Bhattacharyya on yoga. I will therefore confine myself to a 'preliminary tour' in 'Studies in Yoga Philosophy', with the intention of 'marking' a few significant points, in preparation of a full-fledged philosophical excavation in the, hopefully near, future. However, before delving into Bhattacharyya, I wish to look into Daya Krishna's analysis of Bhattacharyya, in his work 'Developments in Indian Philosophy from the Eighteenth Century Onwards'. It will not only provide us with a solid philosophical introduction to Bhattacharyya, but will also set the direction towards our 'tour' in Bhattacharyya. Contrary to Bhattacharyya's common depiction as a neo-Kantian, a neo-Vedantin, or an intriguing mixture of both, Daya Krishna highlights Bhattacharyya's correspondence with the Sankhya tradition. As such, namely as neo-Sankhyan, the significance of Bhattacharyya's work on Yoga, Sankhya's neighbouring tradition or school of thought, becomes evident.

Daya Krishna on Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya

'The paradoxicality of self-consciousness', Daya Krishna opens his discussion of Bhattacharyya's project, 'is that while self-consciousness

necessarily involves a relation between consciousness and object, this relationship seems to be extremely puzzling in character' (10.1.195). He thus introduces two central features of Bhattacharyya. First, his deep interest in the relationship between the subject and the object, in search—we will shortly see—of 'pure subjectivity' divorced from any objectivity. This clear-cut distinction between the subject and the object, and the horizon of an 'objectless subject' is reminiscent of Sankhya metaphysics. And second, it is hinted in Daya Krishna's opening remark that for Bhattacharyya, 'subject' and 'consciousness' are almost synonyms.

The 'paradoxicality' that Daya Krishna speaks of pertains to the asymmetry between the subject and the object, as far as their relationship to one another is concerned. For the object, its relationship to the consciousness or subject is a purely contingent fact, and it does not seem to be affected by this relationship when it occurs. The very notion of 'object' conveys a claim for 'ontic independence', as Daya Krishna puts it. For consciousness, or the subject, its relationship with the object is more ambivalent. Consciousness feels that this relationship is opposed to its very nature, having become dependent on 'something' different from itself. This 'something', the object, poses a problem for the subject. 'The subject thus wants to be rid of the object', Daya Krishna explains, that is, 'to remain in its subjectivity, undisturbed by anything alien to itself'. And he summarises Bhattacharyya's standpoint as he reads him, suggesting that 'both the subject and the object, which are revealed to be related in self-consciousness in a paradoxical and problematic fashion, feel themselves to be essentially self-sufficient and only accidentally involved in a relationship from which they want to be freed' (10.1.296).



Daya Krishna (1924–2007)

Now Daya Krishna lets the cat out of the bag, and speaks of Bhattacharyya as taking forward the 'Samkhyan insight' as he puts it, regarding the inherent tension between the subject and whatever appears as the object to it. This he does, Daya Krishna explicates, 'in a dialectic that almost parallels the Hegelian dialectic'. Again, this is no empty compliment, or an attempt to project Bhattacharyya as the 'Indian Hegel'. Daya Krishna literally identifies the Hegelian dialectic in Bhattacharyya's neo-Sankhyan move. He clarifies:

Hegel's dialectic moves through negation, towards a synthesis resulting in an ultimate synthesis, where all earlier relations are preserved or transformed into a positivity which is his notion of the absolute. Bhattacharyya's dialectic, on the other hand, moves through what may be called a process of identification and de-identification, where each step in de-identification reveals the earlier identification to have been both voluntary and mistaken. The dialectic, of course, is that of Samkhya, but it has been given a new turn by K.C. Bhattacharyya (10.1.296–7).

According to Bhattacharyya, at each level of subjectivity, which is the outcome of the identification of the subject with a certain category of objects, a correlate world of objectivity opens up, which at this level, and this level alone, is perceived as 'real'. If one identifies, for instance, with the body, the world of sense-perception, which is the correlate world of objectivity in this case, is not only considered as 'real', but moreover, 'as the paradigmatic example of what real is or can be' (10.1.297). In the same way, identification with reason or the intellect, makes the world of concepts and ideas 'real', whereas the world of perception becomes 'mere shadow, an incomplete and imperfect exemplification of the universal, which alone is now considered to be paradigmatically real'. But this identification is as arbitrary and voluntary, as the identification with the body. One may also identify with will, an identification which opens up a world of ideals and values, seen now as 'real'. This world has to be actualised through action, disclosing the inseparability of will and action. But this identification is again arbitrary, as much as any other identification.

One may also identify with feeling, an identification that grants 'reality' to 'the world of emotions and passions with its nuances and shades of joy and sorrow, delight and despair', as Daya Krishna beautifully puts it. But the crux of the matter is that the act of de-identification reveals the fact that the preceding identification was as free or voluntary an act on behalf of the subject or consciousness as its present 'undoing'. Had this not been the case, it would not be able to withdraw or pull back from this identification. Hence Bhattacharyya's dialectic unveils a sense of freedom, freedom which is the heart and soul of the subject as projected here. Both acts, namely identification and de-identification, are seen as instances of freedom. However, Bhattacharyya,

as Daya Krishna shows, highlights the act of de-identification, central—I would like to add—in the *Yoga Sutra*, and conveyed by notions such as *vairagya*, *pratyahara* and of course *kaivalya*. Daya Krishna's critique of Bhattacharyya—and of Patanjali, in his paper 'The Undeciphered Text: Anomalies, Problems and Paradoxes in the Yogasutra',⁸ is directed at the 'one-sidedness' of freedom as withdrawal. 'Bhattacharyya', Daya Krishna writes,

seems more interested in moving from one level [of subjectivity] to another, than in dwelling at the levels themselves, or in attempting a phenomenological study of the correlate worlds that each level creates. He is in a hurry to reach the subject as freedom, forgetting that the real life of the subject as freedom is in the phenomenology of identification and de-identification, along with the creation and dissolution of worlds, and not only in the complete withdrawal of the spirit into itself, without any correlate world at all with which to relate or to withdraw from. ... Bhattacharyya seems to forget his own insight that the identification was as much an act of freedom as the de-identification. ... He has also not thought of the possibility of a freer re-identification after de-identification, with as much freedom as the act of de-identification is supposed to have.⁹

This paragraph reveals the difference between Daya Krishna and Bhattacharyya. For Daya Krishna, freedom is a matter of free travel between identification and de-identification, engagement and disengagement. For him, this wilful free travel is the heart of the matter. According to Daya Krishna, total withdrawal, as in *nirbija-samadhi*,¹⁰ cannot be the final accord of a treatise about freedom. In 'The Undeciphered Text', he suggests that withdrawal without return amounts to 'the paradoxical situation where the attainment of freedom results in the total loss of freedom, as one becomes intrinsically

incapable of exercising any freedom at all'.¹¹ Acceptance of the idea of return after withdrawal, Daya Krishna further suggests, namely the 'freer re-identification' that he spoke about above, entails the acceptance of the 'reality' of the world to which one returns. Unlike Bhattacharyya, Daya Krishna is hardly 'in a hurry to reach the subject as freedom'. And moreover, for him 'one's adventure into the paramartha', as he puts it, must have an effect in the world, upon return. Otherwise it is empty and futile.

Interestingly, Daya Krishna speaks of diverse influences on Bhattacharyya: Advaita Vedanta, Sankhya, Kant and Hegel, and 'some strands of Jainism'—the Jain theory of alternative standpoints translates into Bhattacharyya's almost oxymoronic notion of 'alternative absolutes'—but he does not mention Patanjali's yoga. The link between Daya Krishna's critique on de-identification in Patanjali and Bhattacharyya—Daya Krishna draws on 'The Subject as Freedom'—is mine. It is time to take into account the *Yoga Sutra* within Bhattacharyya's 'unitary philosophical reflection', as Daya Krishna puts it,¹² which includes 'diverse strands of Indian and Western philosophical thought, combining them into a powerful system' (299). The next segment is a small step in this direction.

Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya on Yoga

For Bhattacharyya, the essential difference between Sankhya and Yoga lies in the way they perceive the concept of will or willing.¹³ In Sankhya, willing is a function of *ahamkara*, not of the *buddhi*. It is an activity of a 'finite agent', namely the worldly 'me', through which one maintains one's 'finitude'. The *buddhi*, on the other hand, is perceived here as infinite. Willing emanates from the 'self-conscious certitude which is the function of the *buddhi*', but works at the limited level of *ahamkara*. In yoga, on the other hand,

willing is *asmita*. It is not only born of self-consciousness—as in Sankhya—but it is in fact 'self-conscious subjectivity'. To be conscious of willing, Bhattacharyya explains, is to be conscious of 'I willing', conscious not just of 'me', but of 'I becoming me'. This 'me' is the day-to-day 'finite me'; the 'I' alludes to the infinity of 'pure subjectivity'. The idea is that our phenomenal existence is a matter of the 'infinite I' minimising itself to a 'me', unlimited subjectivity identifying with limited objectivity.

This is how Bhattacharyya opens his discussion of yoga philosophy. Very technical, rooted in textual evidence, and at the same time philosophical, as he argues, from the very beginning, that the concept of willing is the heart of the difference between Sankhya and yoga, and the soul of Patanjali's yoga. In Sankhya, freedom, *kaivalya*, is embedded in knowledge, and is the result of an epistemological correction. When the error, *avidya* is corrected, freedom occurs. In yoga it is a matter of willing. Will is the force that takes the aspirant of freedom from the realisation 'I becoming me' to the certitude 'I am I'.

To substantiate his claim that in yoga 'willing runs beyond knowing' (222), Bhattacharyya takes his readers to *Yoga Sutra* 1.18, where *asamprajnata*-samadhi is expounded. Here, Patanjali asserts that in this subtle stage of meditation, as against the former stage, namely *samprajnata*-samadhi, the yogi cuts through the *vritti*-level of consciousness and reaches the subterranean *samskara*-level. In other words, when mental activity is suspended, the practitioner of yoga can look directly into one's karmic residue. In this refined meditative stage, knowledge can no longer take place—'there is no knowledge except through *vritti*', Bhattacharyya clearly writes. Therefore, it is up to will alone to carry the aspirant forward, to the objectless subjectivity of *nirbija*-samadhi.

Bhattacharyya further suggests that the *vrittis*, the modifications of the mind, move in two directions, positive and negative. In this respect, Patanjali, in *Yoga Sutra* 1.5, speaks in terms of *klisha* and *aklisha*, namely *vrittis* that generate pain, or give birth to *kleshas*, apropos the *klesha*-scheme expounded in the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*, and *vrittis* that do not. The latter category pertains to mental activity which is part of preliminary meditative stages, included under the category of *samprajnata*, as described in *Yoga Sutra*, 1.17. With reference to the two directions that consciousness can take, Patanjali, speaking of the psychological *samskara*-level, underlying the mental *vritti*-level, further employs, in *Yoga Sutra* 3.9, the notions *vyutthana* and *nirodha*, 'creation' and 'cessation'. According to him, outward-facing consciousness, driven by *vyutthana* *samskaras*, roots the human person in phenomenal existence, *bhoga*, as he puts it in *Yoga Sutra* 2.18. Whereas inward-facing consciousness, facilitated by *nirodha* *samskaras*, is contributive of *apavarga*, 'release' from phenomenality.

In his commentary on *Yoga Sutra* 1.12, Vyasa, Patanjali's commentator, explains the two directions of consciousness in his own way. He famously writes:

Chittanadi nama ubhayatovahini vahati kalyanaya vahati papaya cha. Ya tu kaivalyapragbhara vivekavishayanimna sa kalyanavaha. Samsarapragbhara avivekavishayanimna papavaha. Tatra vairagyena vishayasrotah khilikriyate vivekadarshanabhyasena vivekasrota udghatyate ityubhayadhinash-chittavrittinirodhah.

That which is called 'the river of the mind' flows in two directions. It flows towards the good, *kalyanaya*, and towards evil, *papaya*. That which is inclined towards the domain of *viveka* and leads to *kaivalya* flows to the good. That which is inclined towards the domain of *aviveka* and leads to *samsara*, or worldliness, flows to the evil. Of these, the flow towards

objects is overcome by dispassion, *vairagya*. And repetitive practice, *abhyasa*, of holding onto a discerning view, *viveka-darshana*, unlocks the flow of this very *viveka*. Hence, *chitta-vritti-nirodhah*, the cessation of the modifications of the mind, depends on both, *abhyasa* and *vairagya*.

Vyasa's metaphor, portraying the mind as a flowing river is potent. It is the same Vyasa, who in his commentary on *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2, writes that the word 'all', *sarva*, does not occur here, hence yoga as a process is not the cessation of 'all' mental activity, but merely of *papaya*, leading to evil, to *aviveka*, activity of the mind. But in *Yoga Sutra*, 1.51, the word *sarva* does occur, hence yoga as the end-result of yoga as a process is a matter of going 'beyond good and evil'. In yoga as the end-result, the *chitta-nadi* becomes flow-less and water-less.

For Vyasa, then, positive and negative, the terms used by Bhattacharyya, translate into 'good' and 'evil'. The connection between *duhkha* and *papa*, pain and evil, is interesting. The notion of *duhkha* is predominant in the first and second chapters of the *Yoga Sutra*, for instance in Patanjali's therapeutic paradigm, similar to the Buddhist 'four noble truths', expounded in sutras 2.16–7 and 2.25–6. Here Patanjali uses the terms *heya*, *heya-hetu*, *hana*, and *hanopaya*, referring to 'that which is to be eliminated', the malady, the cause of malady, possible elimination, that is cure, and the prescribed method or remedy. The *heya*, *Yoga Sutra* 2.16, is of course *duhkha*.

Bhattacharyya discusses the connection between pain and evil in the chapter 'Pain as Evil' of his 'Studies in Samkhya Philosophy' (135–42). This short chapter is for me Bhattacharyya's commentary on the first verse of *Sankhya Karika*: '*Duhkha-traya'bhighataj-jijnasa tad-abhigatake betau*; because of the torment of the three types of pain, there arises the wish to know the means

of its elimination.' Bhattacharyya argues that the wish for freedom from pain is inbuilt within the very experience of pain. For him, the pain and the wish to overcome it are inseparable. It is not that pain gives rise to this wish, but in a sense, vice versa. 'If the wish were absent', Bhattacharyya writes, 'there would be no feeling of pain' (135). 'The wish to freedom', Bhattacharyya, further writes, 'is the reflective self, or reason itself, which has to be regarded as conditioning the facthood of pain and is, therefore, acting suicidally. Reflection on pain, though implying the possibility of freedom from it, is in this sense an evil, the potentiality of pain.' The wish for freedom from pain is referred to by Bhattacharyya as 'suicidal', and as 'evil', owing to its paradoxical 'necessity' in generating the same pain that one wishes to overcome.

Bhattacharyya's move reminds me of a famous interaction between the Advaitin and the opponent in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.3. Here, the latter asks: 'Whose is avidya?, *kasya punar ayam aprabodha iti chet*', the worldly-samsara gaze—Acharya Shankara uses the word *aprabodha*, which I 'translated' to *avidya*—and receives the striking answer: 'It is yours, since you asked about it!, *yas tvam prichchhasi tasya ta iti vadamah*'. The question, or more broadly, the act of questioning, is essential if one wishes to become free from *avidya*. But like in Bhattacharyya, it is this very question which constitutes and validates the gaze that one aspires to become free from. What is the way out of this paradox? In Bhattacharyya, it is reflection upon reflection, a second level of reflection, which reveals that pain is not an 'absolute fact' (136).

The incentive for my visit to Bhattacharyya's 'Pain as Evil' was his assertion that the modifications of the mind in Patanjali work in two directions, positive and negative. When consciousness

is outward-facing, or world-facing—*pravritti*, as he puts it, a 'positive' phrase owing to the prefix *pra*—it is 'negative' as far as one's striving to freedom is concerned, as it distances the aspirant from 'pure subjectivity'. And when consciousness is self-facing—*nivritti*, as Bhattacharyya puts it, a 'negative' phrase, owing to the prefix *ni*—it is a 'positive' move towards freedom as subjectivity. Hence in Bhattacharyya, 'positive' is negative, and 'negative' is positive. He further clarifies that in yoga, both *pravritti* and *nivritti* are forms of willing. In Sankhya, *nivritti* is not willing, since for the Sankhyan, willing is a phenomenal activity. Here *nivritti* is considered as 'reflection', which allows the aspirant to distance oneself from willing in phenomenality. But in yoga, *nivritti* is 'willing explicitly to cancel finitising *pravritti*, willing in reflective knowledge, where knowledge is an aspect of willing, and is to be ultimately superseded by it ... negative willing [*nivritti*] outruns knowledge in the last resort in *asamprajna*' (222). Bhattacharyya distinguishes between the knowledge of Sankhya, which is the platter of freedom handed over to the aspirant, and the knowledge of yoga, which according to him is hardly 'the end of the game'. Having been gained, it still has 'to be actualised', through will.

In his capacity as a 'contemporary classical commentator' of the *Yoga Sutra*, Bhattacharyya further explains the difference between *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata*, the two main categories of meditation in Patanjali, through 'his own' notion of willing. According to him, in *samprajnata*, consciousness 'halts' on a certain *vritti*, and no longer 'roams' from one *vritti* to another, roaming which is characteristic of 'phenomenal consciousness'. In *asamprajnata*, consciousness recedes from the *vrittis* altogether. It no longer functions in a 'vritti mode'. 'The will to prevent the emergence of *vritti*', Bhattacharyya drives his point home, 'is called *nirodha*, which

is understood as the heart of yoga, free willing being in essence the activity of *nirodha*' (226).

In the ninth paragraph of 'Samkhyā and Yoga' (226), Bhattacharyya further suggests that samadhi is the outcome of *nirodha*, which he refers to as 'vritti-arresting will'. For Sankhya, Bhattacharyya elucidates, *nirodha* is not an activity, but a synonym of samadhi, 'a passive quiescence that comes spontaneously as the concentration of the cognitive activity of reflection'. But in yoga, *nirodha* and samadhi are both activities, samadhi seen as 'continuous with the freedom of the *nirodha*-will'. Bhattacharyya returns to the distinction between *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata*, and speaks of two aspects, 'affected' and 'spontaneous', which in the former meditative stage are distinct, but in the latter 'appear as one free being with alternative stresses'. And he continues to explain that now, at this meditative stage, 'the *nirodha*-will that leads to it is taken as itself coming spontaneously, as the content of a cognitive reflection other than, though emerging in, *viveka*'. It is not easy to describe in words the experiential content of a subtle meditation such as *asamprajnata*, but this is exactly what Bhattacharyya attempts to do here. And here comes the crux of his analysis: 'This cognitive reflection', he writes, 'is what is meant by *ishvara-pranidhana* in *Yoga Sutra*, 1.23'.

For Bhattacharyya, *ishvara-pranidhana* is a technical notion, pertaining to a distinct moment of meditation, as he subsequently explains. For him, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.23, *ishvara-pranidhanad va*, does not return to *Yoga Sutra*, 1.12, '*nirodha* is accomplished through the mutuality of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, posing an alternative to *abhyasa-vairagyabhyam* in the form of 'god, [who] due to the devotee's devotion, desires his liberation to be fast, even when he follows the means slackly'—as in Vijnanabhikshu's *Yogavarttika*, summarised by T S Rukmani.¹⁴ Bhattacharyya reads *Yoga Sutra*, 1.23, as the conclusion of a series of consecutive

sutras, 1.18–22, that precedes it. On *Yoga Sutra*, 1.18, Bhattacharyya comments, as we already saw, that in *asamprajnata*, the two aspects of meditation, affected and spontaneous, as if merge. In *Yoga Sutra*, 1.19, Patanjali speaks of two categories of devas or yogis, which he refers to as *videha* and *prakriti-laya*, for whom samadhi, or apropos the classical commentators, at least a quasi-samadhi state, is accessible effortlessly, according to their karmic residue. For Bhattacharyya, these two categories pertain to devas, and the stage of meditation that they spontaneously reach is nothing short of *asamprajnata*. On *Yoga Sutra*, 1.20, Bhattacharyya writes that 'the others'—*itaresham* in Patanjali, namely those who do not belong to the categories of *videha* and *prakriti-laya*—can reach *asamprajnata* through 'spiritual activity', which is of two alternative kinds, 'willing' or 'surrender of willing'. Willing, or *nirodha*-will, involves—Bhattacharyya draws on Patanjali—'*shraddha* (faith), *virya* (strength of will) etc.'

Like the classical commentators, who often use the particle *adi*, when the text commented upon is open before the commentator and the reader alike, Bhattacharyya need not complete the sutra under discussion. His rendering of *virya* as 'strength of will' is interesting, and fits his own line of commentary. 'Surrender of willing' is *ishvara-pranidhana*, 'a unique mode of reflection on God', Bhattacharyya explains. If *nirodha* for him, is 'negative willing, willing to arrest positive willing', then he depicts *ishvara-pranidhana* as 'the willing to arrest negative willing, and therefore all willing, to reverse in fact the entire attitude of willing. ... [This] not-willing, or surrender of willing, is positive contemplation of the mystery of the absolute freedom of God'.¹⁵ It is to be noted the 'not willing', or 'surrender of willing', is as much a datum-point on Bhattacharyya's willing-map as *nirodha*-will, which he describes as a 'super intense' form of willing (226).

Interestingly, in two sutras, 1.21–2, that Bhattacharyya does not discuss directly, focusing as he does on sutras 1.18–20—*asamprajnata*, the devas, and strength of will, and the like—and sutra 1.23, *ishvara-pranidhana*, but which are very much ‘there’, within the series of sutras that he highlights in his discussion, Patanjali himself speaks of what Bhattacharyya refers to as willing. Here Patanjali writes in sutra 1.21 that *asamprajnata* samadhi ‘is nearer to those whose will is most intense, *tivra-samveganam asannah*’, and he writes in sutra 1.22 that, ‘since [the intensity of will can be] mild, medium or extreme, there is a difference’ in the yogi’s proximity to this subtle meditative stage, ‘*mridu-madhyā-adhimatratvat tato’pi visheshah*’. drawing on Bhattacharyya, I interweaved the word ‘will’ into Patanjali’s text. Patanjali, however uses the word *samvega*, about which Swami Hariharananda Aranya comments that ‘it means not only detachment, but also aptitude combined with a feeling of reverence in devotional practice, and the resultant ardour to hasten forward. It is like gathering momentum as you proceed.’¹⁶ Hariharananda’s comment sits well with, and complements Bhattacharyya’s notion of willing. Interestingly again, Bhattacharyya hints at but does not spell out the resemblance and continuity between the spontaneity of the devas in *Yoga Sutra* 1.19 and of *ishvara*; *ishvara-pranidhana* depicted by him as a moment of sheer spontaneity in the course of meditation, as against ‘the entire attitude of willing’.

The space kindly allotted to me in *Prabuddha Bharata* is reaching its limit. If the canvas was broader, I could elaborate on Bhattacharyya’s discussion of ‘time as *vikalpa*’.¹⁷ The notion of *vikalpa* in Patanjali and Bhattacharyya deserves close reflection. My hunch is that this pertinent notion sheds light on Bhattacharyya’s famous distinction, in his essay ‘The Concept of Philosophy’, between ‘thinking’ and ‘speaking’. I would like to suggest that ‘speaking’, pertaining in

Bhattacharyya to philosophy or to abstract thinking at large—as against ‘thinking’ which alludes here to ‘scientific facts’ or ‘empirical thought’—is not unrelated to Patanjali’s concept of *vikalpa*.

If I had the space, I would also elaborate on Bhattacharyya’s analysis of Patanjali’s *vrittis*-scheme. According to him:


The *vrittis* are understood in Yoga as cognitive presentations ... presentation of object as real (*pramana*), as unreal (*viparyaya*), as constructive (*vikalpa*), as absence of presentation (*nidra*) and as re-presentation of an object as presented (*smriti*). The classification of *vrittis* is at once psychological and epistemological. Psychological so far as presentation is itself a differentiated mental object, and epistemological so far as presentation is of an experiential object (255).

As usual, Bhattacharyya’s formulation is thought-provoking. The depiction of the *vrittis* as ‘cognitive presentations’, and his distinction between the psychological and the epistemological certainly deserve further thought.

I will close with Bhattacharyya on the *siddhis*, the ‘yogic powers’ expounded in the third chapter of the *Yoga Sutra*. The place and meaning of the *siddhis* in Patanjali, and the continuity, or the ambivalence, between *siddhi* and *kaivalya* as possibly inverted concepts of freedom, conveying world-making, *siddhi*, versus introverted withdrawal, *kaivalya*, should be carefully looked into. In brief, Bhattacharyya’s position is that ‘there is general skepticism at the present day not only about any mental activity actually yielding the capacity of producing magical effects in nature, but even about the possibility of willing in the mistaken faith in such magic, skepticism not only about the yoga-vibhūtis but about the psychological possibility of yoga itself. ... [But] whoever admits free willing, in a sense, admits magic in some form or other’ (290).

Bhattacharyya is right. The *siddhis* or *vibhūtis*, which he describes as ‘magical effects in

nature', produced by 'mental activity', that is, by *samyama*, are indeed suspicious from the present-day 'rationalist' perspective. This scepticism is not just about the powers described by Patanjali, but about the underlying assumption that the yogi can attain 'mastery which extends from the minutest particle to the largest entity, *parama-anu-parama-mahattva-anto'sya va-shikarah*', as told in *Yoga Sutra*, 1.40. Compared with the ideal of 'ultimate freedom', the striving for 'supernatural powers' seems marginal, if not imaginary, or even childish. Hence the desire for these powers can be seen as 'willing in the mistaken faith in such magic'. But Bhattacharyya's stand is altogether different. He reminds us that 'Yoga is a spiritual activity and not mere psychic gymnastics. ... [Therefore] some preliminary experience of the magical efficiency of yoga is necessary for an aspirant in order to have a motive for the practice of yoga proper' (315).

The classical commentators see the siddhis as uncalled-for 'side effects' that the yogi obtains spontaneously, as his meditation deepens. Moreover, apropos *Yoga Sutra*, 3.38 and 3.52, the siddhis can be perceived as 'the last temptation' of the yogi on his way to *kaivalya*. But according to Bhattacharyya, a quantum of 'magic' is essential to develop faith, *shraddha*, in the yogi, and to provide 'the proof' that 'willing' works, that is, that 'reality' as conventionally perceived can be played with, manipulated, transformed, even annulled through the power of consciousness. This would be 'yoga proper'. This would be the real magic. Bhattacharyya therefore concludes that 'To doubt yoga-vibhuti is to doubt yoga itself, and to doubt yoga is to doubt the freedom of free will' (291). 

Notes and References

1. This paper is for Mukund Lath. It is part of a broader project on Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya on yoga, generously funded by the Israel

- Science Foundation, Grant No. 937/15.
2. See Jay L Garfield, 'Solving Kant's Problem: K.C. Bhattacharyya on Self-Knowledge', *Indian Epistemology and Metaphysics*, ed. Joerg Tuske (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 355; and A Raghuramaraju, *Philosophy and India: Ancestors, Outsiders, and Predecessors* (Delhi: Oxford University, 2013).
3. See *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, eds Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
4. I am thankful to the Daya Krishna Archive, Jaipur, for sharing with me Daya Krishna's Letters (2003–2007).
5. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), xix.
6. Jonardon Ganeri, 'Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary', *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 27 (2010), 187–207; 187.
7. Daya Krishna, 'Developments in Indian Philosophy from the Eighteenth Century Onwards', *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilisation*, ed. D P Chattopadhyaya, 10 vols (Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilisations, 2001), 10.1.294.
8. See Daya Krishna, 'The Undeciphered Text: Anomalies, Problems and Paradoxes in the *Yogasutra*', *Indian Philosophy: A Counter-perspective* (Delhi: Satguru, 2006), 204–23. Reprinted in Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasutra* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 90–104.
9. 'Developments in Indian Philosophy from the Eighteenth Century Onwards', 10.1.297–8.
10. See Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.51.
11. 'The Undeciphered Text: Anomalies, Problems and Paradoxes in the *Yogasutra*', 93–4.
12. 'Developments in Indian Philosophy from the Eighteenth Century Onwards', 10.1.298.
13. See *Studies in Philosophy*, 221.
14. T S Rukmani, 'Vijnanabhikshu's *Yogavarttika*', *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, eds R S Bhattacharya and G J Larson, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, ed. Karl Potter, 28 vols, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008) 12.295–320.
15. *Studies in Philosophy*, 227.
16. Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. P N Mukerji (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 2012), 2.32; 54.
17. *Studies in Philosophy*, 236–7.



The Yoga of Devotion

Swami Pavitrnananda

If you must be mad, be it not for the things of the world. Be mad with the love of the Lord. ...

Some men shed streams of tears because sons are not born to them, others eat away their hearts in sorrow because they cannot get riches. But alas! how many are there who sorrow and weep for not having seen the Lord! Very few indeed! Verily, he who seeks the Lord, who weeps for Him, attains Him. ...

He who yearns after God cannot bestow any thought on such trifles as food and drink ...

He who feels thirsty does not discard the water of the river merely because it is muddy, nor does he begin to dig a well to find clear water. So he who feels real spiritual thirst does not discard the religion near at hand, be it

Hinduism or any other, nor does he create a new religion for himself. A really thirsty man has no time for such deliberations. ...

Let your heart pant for Him as a miser longs for gold. ...

As the drowning man pants hard for breath, so must one's heart yearn for the Lord, before one can find Him.

Do you know what kind of Love is required for gaining the Lord? Just as a dog with a bruised head runs restlessly, so must one become distressed for His sake.

O heart, call on your almighty Mother sincerely and you will see how She quickly comes running to you. When one calls on God with heart and soul, He cannot remain unmoved.¹

Swami Pavitrnananda (d. 1977) was a former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. This is an edited transcript of a talk he delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York on 3 June 1956.

YOGA MEANS yoke or union, union with God. And what separates us from God, that we want to have union with Him? It is our ego-sense, our I-sense. It is a mysterious thing. You cannot say it exists; you cannot say it does



not exist. In Vedanta, it is said that this maya is existence and non-existence both. You cannot say this egotism or ego-sense exists, because you do not know what it is. You try to analyse it, and do not find it. But on the other hand, you cannot say it does not exist. A few harsh words and at once you flare up; you are disturbed for days together. So it exists, and it does not exist, too.

This mysterious entity is said to be something like a mirage. A mirage really does not exist, but you see it all the while. It is said the deer runs after the water of a mirage; it runs and runs until it dies. It is the same case with us. We are moving at a great speed on ego-sense, and we run and run. We do not know what we run after or why we run. But we run; we are always busy. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that all troubles will be over when this I-ness goes, when you can give up your sense of I, your attachment to I, your love for I. You are not a loser when you give it up, because you do not know what it is, you are not sure whether it exists. It is a mysterious thing.

Once I went on a tour of the western part of India. I knew that at a certain place was a mirage. Swami Vivekananda once saw this mirage, so I was particularly anxious to see it. I was alert so that I should not miss it. At a distance I saw some sprays of sparkling water rising up. I took

for granted that it was an actual river. But I did not see any mirage. I was coming towards the end of the journey. I asked someone, 'Where is the mirage?' He said: 'There it is, right over there.' I had thought it was a real river. So you see it, but it has no existence.

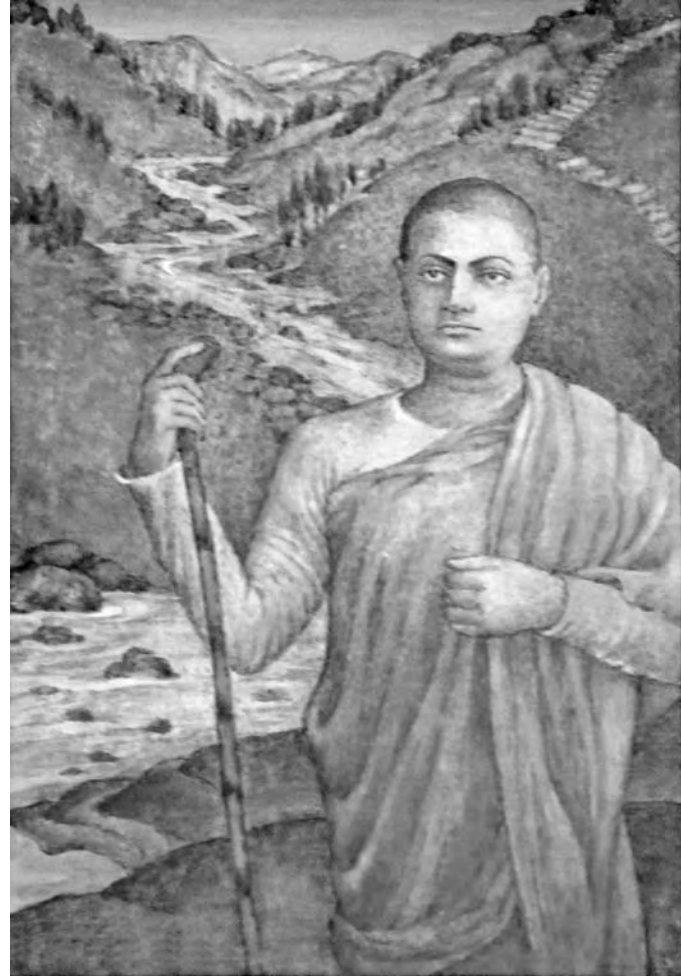
The same is the case with the ego-sense. So all religions say in so many words: 'Not my will but the will of the Lord. It is not I, but Thou, O Lord.' When you can say sincerely, spontaneously, from your own realisation, from your own experience, 'Not I, but Thou, O Lord', all troubles cease: you get the highest realisation. Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, said to one monk: 'At a period the Mother altogether wiped out the I-sense in me. I could not think that this I-ness had any existence in me. It was altogether gone.' That is realisation, that is the end of all our troubles. But we have this I-sense, and it won't go so easily. All our efforts are needed to find the end of it.

This ego-sense expresses itself in three different channels: I think, I feel, and I will. We all experience that; we all feel, we all think, we all will to do certain things. But we think because we have the I-sense. It is said that God does not have to think. Unlike us, God does not have to think with certain material, of this and that: God is

thought itself. God is knowledge itself. God does not have to love, as we love: God is love itself. Because we have this I-sense we think, we feel, we love. As I said, we do not find what this 'I' is, but still we can act upon it. One of the Buddhist meditations is: try to discriminate, just to analyse what you really are. They say, if you analyse you find these things: we see forms; we feel there are things which have names; we have some disposition, outcome of our past lives; and some consciousness. All these five things combine to make this I-sense. Or if we analyse we find that because we have the I-sense we feel we have this body, this mind, these senses, and so on. But basically all is included in these three aspects, feeling, willing, and thinking.

Now, if we can turn these things towards God we will go nearer and nearer to the realisation of the ultimate Truth. As for instance, if we can turn all our feelings towards God, if we can direct all our love towards God, if we can do this completely, we get the realisation. If all our thoughts go towards God, we get the highest concentration; this is the object of meditation. To concentrate your thoughts and direct them towards God: that is the purpose and goal of meditation. In the same way, when you can turn all your activities towards God, when all your activities are dedicated to God, you get the highest realisation.

It is said that with love and feeling you can realise God much more easily than by following other paths. It is true; because we can go faster on the wings of love than in the conducted tour of reason. To go by reason is something like a conducted tour: you halt and think, you halt and see. It is a halting race. But when you go emotionally you go faster. You go with the speed of lightning and it is smooth sailing. You have not to stop and think. So it is said, if we can turn all our feelings towards God we get greater speed in our spiritual life.



But there is danger also. Emotion has great speed, but it may run both ways. It may run upstream or downstream; it may run forward; it may run backward. You have to chasten your emotion. So yoga of devotion means that you must have control of your emotion, rather, you must chasten it. The power is there; direct it in the right channel. If the direction is correct, then you are safe. It is said in a poem of Wordsworth: 'When love is an unerring light, And joy its own security.'² In our early life, joy is not our security. Wherever you find real joy, you feel that you are secure, but we are not secure in our joy, we ordinary persons. But when emotion has become chastened, then it comes: joy is security. Then you cannot find joy in things which are not right for your spiritual life. You have no interest in things which are not good for your spiritual life.



Swami Turiyananda

You are out of element in such things. And you have no attractions to things which do not bring you spiritual light, or which darken your spiritual outlook. So when emotion has been sublimated, has been chastened, has been directed in the right channel, you get eternal light. Then joy is its own security.

What is that kind of love, which is an unerring light? The scriptures on bhakti say: When all our feelings of love, of supreme love, are directed towards God, it is called bhakti or devotion. Supreme love—it must be intense; there should be nothing left behind. Ordinarily our love is divided; we give divided love to all things. But it should be supreme love, undivided love, which we give to God. There is a beautiful poem in Bengali: ‘O Lord, let all my feelings go to Thee, and to Thee alone.’ Not that in order to be religious you must be a ‘forpyned ghost’. In

Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, there is a line, describing a monk: ‘He was nat pale as a forpyned goost’, means tormented ghost.³ You should be a full-blooded personality, with full-blooded emotion. You should not be a dry desert. But that full-blooded emotion should be directed towards God: ‘O Lord, may all my feelings go to Thee, and to Thee alone.’

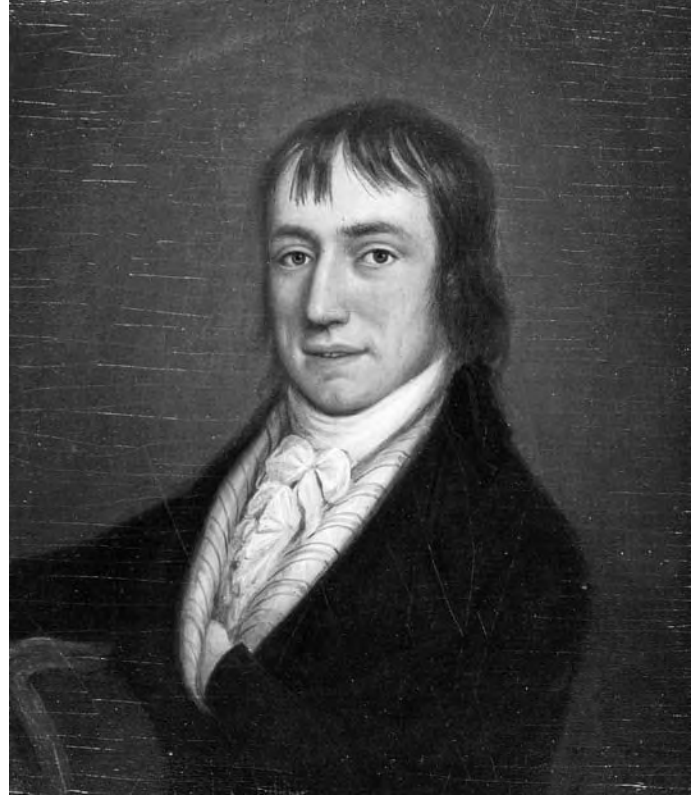
And what is the outcome? When you reach that state you become immortal. Then death has no meaning for you. Immortality does not mean simply that we shall be living eternally. What does it matter if you live five years, ten years or eternally, if you suffer, if you are always in terror. But immortality means that even death cannot frighten you. What does it matter if death comes if our minds are fixed on God, if all our feelings of love have gone to God? When you have felt the touch of the love of God, what terror has death for one? So when one become immortal one does not long for anything else; he has got the supreme object, by getting which all other things seem meaningless, insipid. He has no other attraction. He neither grieves that he couldn’t get this or that; nor does he rejoice in anything else; nor does he feel enthusiastic for any other world. He has got something because of which he is perfectly satisfied within himself. He has reached the goal of his journey. He has found abiding peace. The restless soul has found its own shelter, where it is completely at peace. That is real love.

How can one express that love? How can he tell about this experience? This experience cannot be communicated. So Sri Ramakrishna says, everything has been defiled but the knowledge of Brahman, in other words, the love for Brahman, the love for God. It cannot be communicated. It is something like the experience of a dumb person. He has tasted some good things but he cannot express how those good things

tasted. In the same way you feel the intensity of love, you feel the intensity of joy, but you cannot express that joy, you cannot communicate it to others. Everyone has to experience that joy for himself. So it is said that in religious life nobody can help you; you have to help yourself. Yes, others can give you indirect help. Buddha said that Tathagatas—preacher monks—can give suggestions; but you have to work these out for yourself, to get that peace and joy. So Buddhism stresses self effort so much; because, after all, one has to try to get that experience oneself.

You might say, “That is all theoretical. What is the guarantee that that stage can be reached? It cannot be described, it cannot be expressed, one can only feel it. What is the guarantee that it is not something like the “will-o’-the-wisp”?’ Well, there are many persons who have been fortunate enough to have that experience. They say they have had that experience, only they cannot communicate it to others. They are sure about their experience, and when you look at them you feel, you see that they belong to another world. They have reached a plane of existence which is beyond the reach of ordinary persons. So you cannot deny that; simply because it cannot be communicated, simply because you cannot understand it does not mean that it does not exist. It exists. The history of religion proves that. There are innumerable saints who say the same thing. They say that they get that ineffable joy which cannot be expressed. They have crossed the ocean of maya and they are eager to share that experience with others. But you will have to walk the distance, you will have to undergo that journey yourself. Without undertaking that journey no one can experience that joy.

If we read these things we feel it is something like climbing a mountain peak. It is good to look at the mountain peak melting away in the distant height, but how do we reach that?



William Wordsworth (1770–1850) at Twenty-eight

We feel that it is so far away! Many become scared. Many do not dare. Some long for it but have not the courage to undertake the journey. But the mountain peak is there. The Gita says about the highest spiritual experience: some speak about it, some feel about it; wonderful is that experience about which they speak, wonderful the vision which they see. But it cannot be transferred to others by ordinary souls. Sri Ramakrishna would say that some have heard of the existence of milk, some have seen what milk is like, but only a few persons have tasted milk, milk was sometimes rare. So, some have heard of the wonderful experience of spiritual life; but few, at least not many, have got that experience by themselves. That is religious life. But can we undertake this journey at all, can we reach the goal? Let us see. What are the means available to us? How should we undertake that journey? What are the helps we are likely to get and from what quarters? What are the precautions that should be taken?



IMAGE: RAMAKRISHNA MATH, HYDERABAD

The first common thing is: you must have the right outlook on life. Buddhism says, in the eightfold path the first thing is right outlook. Most of us have not the right outlook on life. We are going just like dumb, driven cattle following the beaten track, eating, drinking, earning money, spending it or accumulating it, and getting a little fame and name. That is all the culmination of man's ambition. The same beaten track we all follow. We have not the right outlook. We have not the courage to think in terms of our past, in terms of our future. What is the right outlook? Find out. Just think: where do we come from? And where will we go? And what is the value of our material possessions? And what is the actual result we get through our activities? What permanent value have these things? That is the right outlook. To have the right outlook you must discriminate always, what is right, what is wrong, what things have permanent value, and what only ephemeral value. At least, what is right and what is wrong.

But discrimination alone, just thinking in an armchair, won't do. You must have the right resolve. As soon as you find what is right you must try to put it into practice. So Buddhism says and all religions say essentially the same things, you must have the right outlook, and you must have the right resolve. And right conduct, and right practice and so on. Usually we cannot do that, because we cannot get the inspiration. Yes, a few great souls do that; barring those exceptional cases, ordinary persons go by habits. They cannot change their habits, not even the habits of their thinking.

Real religion means going upstream. The mass of humanity follows one path which, you say, is not right. So, even if you fail, try to go against the path they have followed; go up the stream. Naturally there will be few who will follow that path. But how can we get the



inspiration to go up the stream, to follow the current in the opposite direction. That can be done only when you come into contact with persons who have realised the goal, who have reached the goal of life by going up the stream and who indicate to us that it was not at all the wrong decision they made. They have explored that unknown land and from their experience they say that it has real existence; once can go there. So the scriptures insist that you must have right discrimination, and you must try to contact saints or holy persons who have reached the goal of life. And why should we follow the



scriptures? Because the scriptures contain the experiences of saints.

To get the association of real holy men is very rare. We cannot find many persons who can speak from direct experience. And even if you get the companionship of a saint, you must be able to understand what he is, that here is a holy person. You see things according to your mental-make-up, you understand according to your capacity. How will you know that you have

come into contact with a great saint? Perhaps you will find that he is acting like a madman, or like a child. You might think he is acting like an abnormal person. Romain Rolland in his biography of Sri Ramakrishna says that had he been born in the West, perhaps he would have been sent to some mental hospital. So it is difficult even to recognise a person who is spiritually great. He will not act according to your code of conduct. He has reached a level where he can

see clearly all your foolishness. He cannot act as foolishly as you do. So you see, such a person is very difficult even to understand; but if you can know him or if you are fortunate enough that he reveals himself to you the effect will be instantaneous. At once you will have a glimpse of another world. You will see that this world is not what it really seems.

It is said that contact with a really great saint, even for a moment, will change the whole course of your life. Because you came into direct contact with blazing fire, in spite of yourself you felt the warmth. Just to see a holy person is a great blessing. It happened in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that several persons would come to him and the lives of many persons were thereby changed. One, a great scholar, who saw Sri Ramakrishna only once, said, 'What I could not understand by studying scriptures for my whole life I could understand by seeing him.' One interview was enough. So it is said that the effect of association with a saint is instantaneous. At once you get something. Even if you do not get the effect then and there, it is bound to have its effect on you, because he has been able to show you something. Even if you have not understood just at that time, the result will come in time. So the importance of coming into contact with a real saint. But it is a rare opportunity. You don't get it very often.

The next thing is: read the lives of holy men as a practical proposition. You cannot just go about searching for holy men. Once, in the city of Benares I was passing through from our monastery in the Himalayas and was quartered there for a short period. Some swami came to me and said, 'Here is a lady from America. She wants to talk to someone.' So I asked her to come. And I said, 'What are you seeking?' She said, 'I am in search of a holy man.' I said, 'You cannot find a holy man just by searching for one in the



Romain Rolland (1866–1944) in 1915

streets of Benares. There you will find many persons who will not have any hesitation to cheat you. You might find many cheats, but not holy men that way.' The best thing then is to remain where you are, and read the scriptures, read the lives of holy men. You can get inspiration from them, and that is a much safer thing. It is said that when you read the scriptures and meditate on those thoughts, that practice will gradually transform your life. At least, that reading will make a great impression on your mind and your thoughts will begin to change.

Books have great powers; yes, cold, printed things have great powers. So, governments now and then prescribe books. Recently, I read in a magazine about a reign of terror in Istanbul. There was a great riot. About one hundred million dollars' worth of things were destroyed.

Many churches were burnt and the number of persons murdered was very, very large. How did that riot break out? In the morning paper it was published, or some mischievous persons distributed leaflets, which warned that the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was going to be defiled that day. That acted as a wildfire. So things found in cold print have great power.

So when you cannot find a holy man, just read the scriptures, and think and meditate. And as soon as you are convinced that something is true try to put that truth into practice. In the scriptures it is said that we should meditate on the scriptures and follow into practice what the scriptures say. Simply reading won't do. It is only an intellectual luxury. It doesn't produce anything except a little intellectual excitement, and the ability to argue with people. Otherwise, reading without the attempt to put anything to practice is useless. So one should read the scriptures, the lives of the saints, and try to follow in a humble way what one finds to be true and right.

That will be just the beginning. One must pass through any spiritual practices. It is said there are two planes of spiritual life: first the preparatory stage, then the real stage of love and devotion. The religion of most people is a preparatory stage. We have to undergo many things, performing rituals, going to churches, meditation, prayer, and so on. This is the beginning. It is an arduous task, because for a long time, unless one is very fortunate, it doesn't seem to produce any results; one has just to follow these practices. But when real love for God comes there is real joy. Then one is safe. So there are two stages: first the preparatory stage and then the real stage of love and devotion. When real love and devotion to God has awakened in one's heart one feels joy, and that joy carries one aloft in life. But until that stage one has nothing else to do but just to try, to wait and not to become impatient.

Real devotion comes when one's practice becomes continuous. One should think of the Lord continuously, and it will come spontaneously, if your earnestness for spiritual life is strong enough. It must be continuous. One should think of God always and all one's actions should be dedicated to the Lord. All your worries, all your anxieties, all your happiness, all your unhappiness, all should be dedicated to the Lord. Keep yourself separate, just disentangle yourself from all these things. You remain satisfied only with the thought of God. It comes spontaneously when one has real love for God; but it should come, or at least one should try to reach that level, even in the preparatory stage with an effort, even if it is an artificial effort. From the artificial effort the natural thing will come.

And one thing is needful: one should not be proud; one should always have humility. It is said God has partiality for those who are humble. God disfavours those who are proud. There is pride in ordinary life, but spiritual pride is worse than ordinary pride. Just doing a little spiritual practice one feels superior to another person, or one goes into spiritual life to wrestle with God, as it were. 'Why doesn't God come to me? I have done some spiritual practice.' So pride is a great obstacle in spiritual life.


As one continues in spiritual practice one will find the spirit of self-surrender will become more and more natural and spontaneous. And there will come a stage when everything is dedicated to God. You will not care so much whether success will come or whether failure will be your lot. You come to that stage when you surrender everything to God. At the last stage that should and must come. You see, we started with the idea that the one obstacle to union with God is our ego-sense. It must evaporate completely. But this must not happen before the proper

time; in the beginning there must be self-effort. But as you go nearer and nearer the ocean you will feel the cool breeze, until at last you feel there is no more need for any self-effort. There is all self-surrender. You completely surrender yourself to the Lord, or rather it comes even with that will that you have to do it. You feel that is the right thing, your self has become completely nil.

So it is said the highest realisation comes through the grace of the Lord when all our efforts have become exhausted. You get the result, but you do not know how you get it. In ordinary circumstances you find some times the solution of a big, perplexing problem comes all of a sudden; it flashes into your mind. You cannot say it comes out of your efforts. You make the effort, and feel exhausted, but all of a sudden the solution flashes into your mind. The same thing happens in religious life. This is called grace. You have tried and tried, you have exhausted all your energy, and all of a sudden the Truth, the Highest Truth, flashed into your mind. It is called the grace of the Lord.

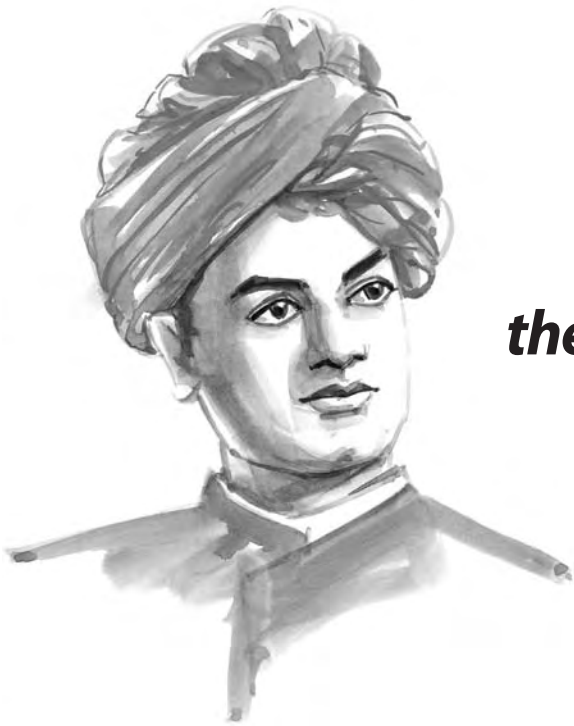
So in spiritual life, by the path of devotion, you try and try and at last, if you are earnest, the highest Truth dawns on you. And you are amazed; you feel that you could not have gotten it by your own effort: it came from On High. It came as sheer grace from God. And fortunately, everyone is entitled to get that grace, if he tries, and continues to search for God.



Let us remember Him and Him alone;
 Let us worship Him and Him alone,
 Who is the Eternal Witness of this universe,
 Who is our only shelter
 in this tempestuous sea of life.
 Let us remember Him and Him alone. 

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Swami Vivekananda and the Modern Yoga Movement

Gopal Stavig

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was himself a perfected yogi. Even as a child, 'Every night brought some strange vision to Naren. Singular was the manner in which he fell asleep. As soon as he closed his eyes, there would appear between his eyebrows a wonderful spot of light of changing hues, which would expand and burst and bathe his whole body in a flood of white radiance. As his mind became preoccupied with this phenomenon, his body would fall asleep. It was a daily occurrence.' Thinking it to be a natural thing, he originally thought everyone had this experience.¹

Today many experts in the field consider Swamiji to be the father of the modern yoga movement in both the West and in India. In agreement with this theme, Karel Werner, a professor of Indian Religion at the University of Durham in England in his work *Yoga and Indian Philosophy* emphasised:

Vivekananda was a great Advaita Vedantist and Jnana Yogi and it was owing to him that Indian

philosophy and Yoga began to fire the imagination of many people in Western countries as early as the end of the last century. Prompted by the urging of his master Ramakrishna and helped by the historical situation of India, which was responsible for his English education, Vivekananda started a trend for popularity of Yoga, which, with inevitable ups and downs, has stayed with us ever since.²

Swamiji's originality is emphasised by Sarah Strauss, Department of Anthropology, University of Wyoming, in a 2002 article:

The yoga that Vivekananda taught to Western audiences was articulated in English explicitly in and for that context. Vivekananda returned to India in triumph, bringing back the new forms of transnationally produced yoga that he had developed over the course of four years of lectures. Many of his insights were codified in written pamphlets like *Raja Yoga* ([1896] 1990), in which he explains core elements of the Hindu Sankhya and yoga traditions in terms easily understandable to a largely Christian, English-speaking, middle to upper-class audience. He framed his arguments in the language of science and in the spirit of the 1893 parliament's interest in comparative religion. Certainly, Swami Vivekananda's very modern representation of yoga put the ball in play, and many different people picked it up, adding their own spin to a characteristically Hindu multiplex phenomenon. These many new representations of yoga

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permitted, new practices, and accommodated new audiences for an old system.³

In her book *A History of Modern Yoga*, Elizabeth De Michelis of the faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University in England devoted over eighty pages exploring this subject. She discussed:

The shaping of Modern Yoga, of which [Swamiji's 1896 book] *Raja Yoga* is the seminal text. In it, Vivekananda carried out a major re-visitation of yoga history, structures, beliefs and practices and then proceeded to operate a translation (often semantic as well as linguistic) of this "reformed" yoga into something quite different from classical Hindu approaches. Vivekananda's "reshaping" of the yoga tradition [was unique] ... he brought about a number of crucial doctrinal and practical changes to key traditional concepts.

She quotes Anantanand Rambachan who wrote: 'Vivekananda's influence is ... pervasive ... Not only did he largely formulate [the contemporary understanding of Hinduism], but he also gave it the language in which it is articulated. There is very little in modern Hindu, particularly Vedanta, apologetic writing that does not carry the clear imprint of Vivekananda's influence.'⁴

Catherine Albanese Professor of Religious History at the University of Chicago and former President of the American Academy of Religion wrote in 2007, 'Elizabeth De Michelis has argued his [Vivekananda's] seminal role as "creator" of what she terms "fully-fledged Modern Yoga" which for her includes, but is not limited to, "Modern Postural Yoga". In a designation that encompasses not only the United States but all of the West in interaction with the Indian Subcontinent, she credits Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* with "immediately" starting something of a "yoga renaissance" both in India and in the West.'⁵

In a February 1896 letter to Alasinga Perumal (1865–1909), Swamiji revealed:



Alasinga Perumal

Then you see, to put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer startling psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.⁶

To give a couple of examples of the difficulty of understanding traditional Indian texts, Charles Lanman (1850–1941) the distinguished Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University admitted to Swami Abhedananda that he did not understand Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*.⁷ James Woods' (1864–1935) translation and commentary on the *Yoga-System*

of *Patanjali* for the Harvard Oriental Series is technical and not easy to comprehend.

Swamiji's *Raja Yoga*, the first English-language translation and commentary on the subject, is unique, being that he presented yoga in a way that could be understood by modern men and women. It is written in a clear and conversational manner for educated people, rather than in a highly technical classical style understandable only to a specialised expert. That year concerning Paul Deussen's translations of Sanskrit texts, Swamiji told him 'that clearness of definition was of primary, and elegance of diction of very secondary importance.'⁸ In *Raja Yoga*, Swamiji writes: 'Anything that is secret and mysterious in these systems of Yoga should be at once rejected. ... Mystery-mongering weakens the human brain. It has well-nigh destroyed Yoga—one of the grandest of sciences. ... Thus Yoga fell into the hands of a few persons who made it a secret, instead of letting the full blaze of daylight and reason fall upon it. They did so that they might have the powers to themselves.'⁹

In all of his lectures and writings, Swamiji sought to be as broad and comprehensive as possible. That each system of Indian philosophy views the Vedantic truths from a particular perspective. Unity, synthesis, and integration are the prevailing themes of his methodology. As he stated in February 1897, 'All along, in the history of the Hindu race, there never was any attempt at destruction, only construction. ... We have had a host of reformers—Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Chaitanya. These were great reformers, who always were constructive and built according to the circumstances of their time. This is our peculiar method of work' (5.217).¹⁰

Consequently, in seeking a unified system of Indian knowledge he was able to explain Indian raja yoga from many standpoints. These

perspectives included his own spiritual experiences; each of the six traditional schools of Indian philosophy, *darshanas*; tantra and Shaivite, *Kurma Purana*, yogic literature; bhakti, jnana, and karma yoga; and its correspondence with contemporary physics, matter and energy; biology, evolution, anatomy, physiology; psychology, conscious and unconscious mind; and mysticism, spiritual realisation, superconscious.

He would dictate portions of his translation and commentary on *Raja Yoga* to Sarah Waldo, which she took down in longhand.¹¹ She revealed:

It was inspiring to see the Swami as he dictated to me the contents of the work. In delivering his commentaries on the [Yoga] Sutras, he would leave me waiting while he entered deep states of meditation or self-contemplation, to emerge therefrom with some luminous interpretation. I had always to keep the pen dipped in the ink. He might be absorbed for long periods of time, and then suddenly his silence would be broken by some eager expression or some long deliberate teaching.¹²

Reverend Donald Harrington of the Community Church of New York related in a speech given at the United Nations auditorium in 1993 that his father, a druggist, attended the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and later told his children of his experiences:

Among his reminiscences was a remembrance of how the gathering was electrified by the words that were spoken by Swami Vivekananda when he was first introduced, when he explained something which was a little difficult for American religionists to believe—that belief was not the central business of religion. He said, religion is not a way of believing, it is a way of being and becoming. Religion is being real yourself, and becoming part of what is real in the universe. This was a revelation and it was a very striking and important one. My father spoke of it very often.¹³

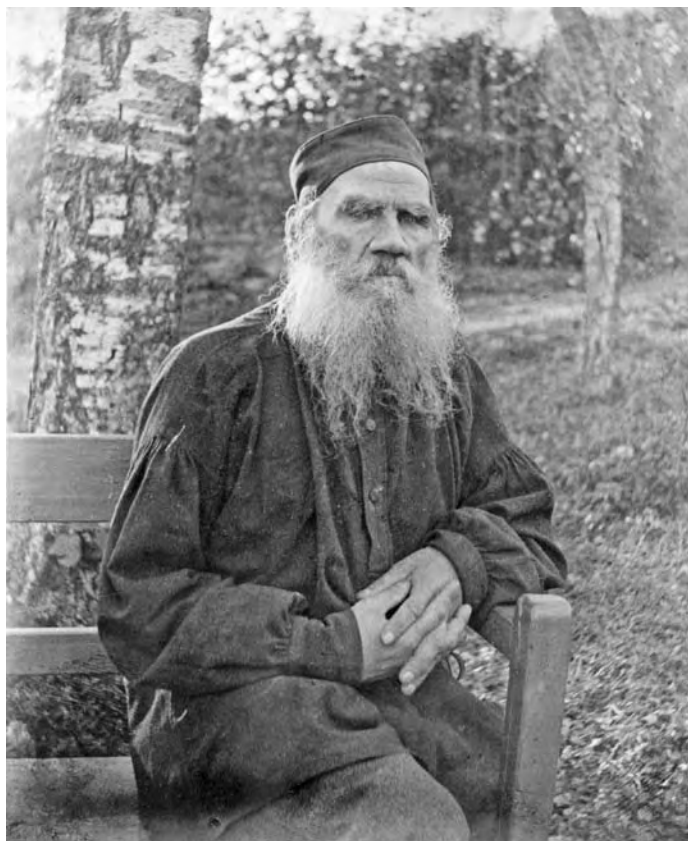
Mrs Constance Towne who knew Swamiji in 1894 later indicated:

He taught me much of the philosophy he preached and wrote about, how to meditate, and what power it would be against the hurts of life; what force of purpose it would attain for the preservation of the body, for logical thought, for self-control, for ecstasy, for the attraction of others; its power for good, its knowing how to read others and their needs; not to dull the edge of your sword, to be moderate in one's consumption of food, to know what one's own body needs to make it live well; of chastity, tolerance, purity of thought, and love for the world—not of one person but of everyone and of all created things.¹⁴

Concerning Swamiji's classic commentary on raja yoga, in Russia, Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) the world famous author noted: "The book is most remarkable and I have received much instruction from it. The metaphysical side of the doctrine, the precept as to what the true "I" of man is, is excellent. So far humanity has frequently gone backwards from the true and lofty and clear conception of the principle of life, but never surpassed it."¹⁵

In August 1900, each morning Swamiji would walk and converse with Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) on their way to the Paris Exposition. In September, they met at a party thrown by the Leggett's in Paris, France. Geddes's biographer stresses that as a result of his encounter with Swamiji, "The eastern discipline of body and mind made such a lasting impression on both Anna [Geddes' wife] and Patrick that they later handed on to their young children the simple Raja Yoga exercises for control of the inner nature." These experiences deepened Geddes' interest in the land and soul of India. Geddes penned a Preface to a French translation of Swamiji's *Raja Yoga*.¹⁶

Along this line Reverend Sidney Spencer



Leo Tolstoy in 1897

(1888–1974) former Principal of Manchester College, Oxford signified:

Vivekananda's approach was that of the mystic, the man who knows himself as one with the Infinite and Eternal Spirit, and that for him was not a mere intellectual abstraction. It was an actual living experience; it was the culmination of his own inner life. At the same time that experience and its central place for him, gave him the clue to the understanding of religion in all its forms—not that religion by any means always reaches such heights or even aspires to such heights. What he came to see was that it is experience that is essential in all forms of religion. What mattered for him was not the dogmas of religion or its rituals or moral codes taken by themselves; what mattered fundamentally was the inner experience for which



it stood. ... 'The end of all religions', he said, 'is the realising of God in the soul'. That, I believe, is indeed the vital fact, to realize God in the soul, to enter into the consciousness of the Divine Presence, however we may express it so that that Supreme and Eternal reality becomes the ruling and guiding and inspiring power in our whole life.¹⁷

Spencer adds, "The 'soul' of Hinduism he found in spirituality, grounded in the sense of the immediate presence of God and the possibility of seeing and knowing Him. At its highest level it calls for concentration on that endeavour and so (Vivekananda believed) for renunciation of the world. The Hindu seeks perfection through the merging of his life in the infinite and universal Life of Brahman (God). Hinduism stands thus in principle for universal charity and tolerance."¹⁸

Marie Louise Burke (Sister Gargi) (1912–2004) specified:

One of the most salient points of the Swami's teaching was that the Reality, the Absolute, was not a matter of speculation, but of *supersensuous* experience. Nor was the possibility of

such experience a matter of speculation. Down through the ages, the great seers and saints of the world have testified to their own vivid, immediate, permanent, realization of ultimate Reality. The Swami himself not only vouched for such knowledge, but insisted that everyone can and must attain it; for without it, religion was mere talk.¹⁹

Because of its practical value, no aspect of Indian thought has gained greater acceptance in the West than yoga practice and philosophy. Today yoga and meditation are undertaken by millions of Westerners to gain spiritual awareness, maintain good physical health, reduce tension and stress, feel peace of mind, to make their mind more concentrated, and to become a better person. According to a scientific study conducted by *Yoga Journal* and *Yoga Alliance*, the number of Americans practising yoga has risen amazingly from four million in 2001 to 20.4 million in 2012 and to 36.7 million in 2016. The practice has entered the family system since 37 per cent have children under the age of eighteen who also practise yoga. Seventy-two per cent

are women, 74 per cent are relatively new, practising it for five or less years, and 56 per cent are engaged in yoga for stress relief. In 2012, the National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health discovered that 18 million, 8 per cent of US adults were involved in mantra, mindfulness, spiritual, or yoga meditation. The number of meditators is about 90 per cent as high as the number of yoga parishioners. Many of these people are not associated with traditional religious and spiritual traditions. Experts expect these percentages to rise in the future.²⁰

Consequently, with the expansion of education and yoga, modern religion is placing more emphasis on reason and religious experience than in the past. Other auspicious signs are that India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi got the United Nations to create a yearly International Yoga day beginning 21 June 2015. President Barack Obama carries a statuette of the Hindu deity Hanuman, along with a tiny Buddha statue and a Christian rosary bead and Coptic cross, in his pocket. He seeks inspiration from them when he feels tired and discouraged. On both sides of the political spectrum, Hilary Clinton and Ivanka Trump practise yoga.

The Rationale for a Yoga Philosophy

The goal of yoga psychology is more than being a well-adjusted member of society, but a spiritual transformation of personality and character. Western psychology seeks to make the unconscious, conscious, while yoga's goal is to make the superconscious, conscious. Through a process of concentration, yoga unlike psychoanalysis works directly on altering the forces and vibrational states of the mind composed of subtle matter and energy. Through yogic practices, powers of restraining the mind are developed that nullify negative mental vibrations making them ineffective in causing mental problems. Meditation

brings about an unexpected release and awareness of deeply embedded memories, thoughts, and feelings previously hidden in the unconscious mind. Those people who experienced a deep mystical experience scored at the top of the Affect Balance Scale, developed by a University of Chicago psychologist, of psychological well-being. No other factor was found that correlated so highly with that state.²¹

Raja yoga philosophy claims that by faithfully following its methods for a long period of time, its practitioners will be transformed and adopt saintly qualities with greatly improved levels of intelligence and benevolence. They might attain samadhi and make contact with the Divine world. In order to validate these claims Swamiji developed a comprehensive philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology of the mind that has never been surpassed, to explain why this is possible. His system of ideas discussed below include the mind's natural tendency to externalise and its ability to control the external world; the process of personal evolution can be greatly speeded up; the awakening of the kundalini force and superconscious samadhi brings illumination and Divine wisdom; the mind has three states, unconscious, conscious, and superconscious, that is dormant in most people; one can manifest the innate Divinity within; and our mind is a fragment of the universal Mind.

Swamiji clarifies:

The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated, they illumine. ... From our childhood upwards we have been taught only to pay attention to things external, but never to things internal; hence most of us have nearly lost the faculty of observing the internal mechanism. To turn the mind, as it were, inside, stop it from going outside, and then to concentrate all its powers, and throw them upon the mind itself, in order that it may know its own nature, analyze itself, is very hard

work. ... There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. ... The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets.²²

When a person attempts to meditate on the inner world, there is a tendency for the mind to concentrate on their external life experiences. The mind naturally goes out through the five senses and internalises those experiences. Unless the mind is properly trained, it is difficult for it to withdraw from the external world and observe its own nature.

The external world of the five senses and the internal world of the mind are so interconnected that through mind control one can gain control over the external world. Swamiji writes: 'The external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the effect. So the external world is the effect, the internal the cause. In the same way external forces are simply the grosser parts, of which the internal forces are the finer. The man who has discovered and learned how to manipulate the internal forces will get the whole of nature under his control' (1.132).

'Just as Akasha [Primal Matter] is the infinite, omnipresent material of this universe, so is this Prana [Primal Energy] the infinite, omnipresent manifesting power of this universe.' If a person had perfect understanding of the prana one could 'control everything in the universe, from the atoms to the biggest suns. ... Thought is the finest and highest action of Prana.' 'Each of us is one point in the infinite ocean of matter [Akasha]. Similarly, each of our minds is a thought whirlpool in the ocean of thought' (1.147-8, 150-2).

The purpose of the science of yoga is 'to shorten the time for reaching perfection'. By getting control of the internal prana of mental power one can speed up the process of personal evolution. 'Instead of slowly advancing from point to point and waiting until the whole human race has become perfect,' great souls reached perfection in one lifetime (1.157).

As this Kundalini force travels from centre to centre, layer after layer of the mind, as it were, opens up, and this universe is perceived by the Yogi in its fine, or causal form. ... Thus the rousing of the Kundalini is the one and only way to attaining Divine Wisdom, superconscious perception, realization of the spirit (1.164-5).

From one state a man comes out the very same man that he went in, and from another state the man comes out enlightened, a sage, a prophet, a saint, his whole character changed, his life changed, illumined. These are the two effects. Now the effects being different, the causes must be different. As this illumination with which a man comes back from Samadhi is much higher than can be got from unconsciousness, or much higher than can be got by reasoning in a conscious state, it must, therefore, be superconsciousness, and Samadhi is called the superconscious state. ... The Yogi teaches that the mind itself has a higher state of existence, beyond reason, a superconscious state, and when the mind gets to that higher state, then this knowledge, beyond reasoning, comes to man. Metaphysical and transcendental knowledge comes to that man. ... Because these three states—instinct, reason, and superconsciousness, or the unconscious, conscious, and superconscious states—belong to one and the same mind. There are not three minds in one man, but one state of it develops into the others. Instinct develops into reason, and reason into the transcendental consciousness. ... When this superconscious state is reached, man becomes free and divine; death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron

bondage becomes liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious (1.181, 183, 185, 257; 2.35).

The goal is to get rid of nature's control over us by manifesting our innate Divinity within.

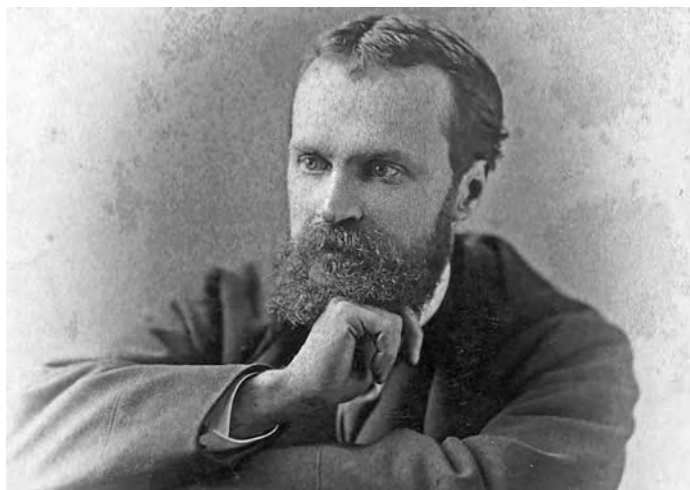
Swamiji states:

Now there is something beyond Akasha [Matter] and Prana [Energy]. Both can be resolved into a third thing called Mahat—the Cosmic Mind. This Cosmic Mind does not create Akasha and Prana, but changes itself into them. ... The Mahat becomes changed into vibrating thought; and that becomes in one part changed into the organs, and in the other part into the fine particles of matter. Out of the combination of all these, the whole of this universe is produced (1.360–1, 506; 2.265).

Mahat is the omnipresent and eternal universal Mind and Body of Brahman-God of which our mind and body is a fragment. 'The mind is universal. Your mind, my mind, all these little minds, are fragments of that Universal Mind, little waves in the ocean; and on account of this continuity, we can convey our thoughts directly to one another.' 'There is only one mass of mind. Different [states] of that mind have different names. [They are] different little whirlpools in this ocean of mind. We are universal and individual at the same time' (1.360–1, 506; 2.265). Due to universal egoism we identify with a minute part of the physical and mental universe, an individual body and mind, and not with the totality.

Swami Vivekananda and the Psychology of Religion Movement

In 1896, with the writing of his classic work *Raja Yoga*, Swamiji became a strong candidate for being the founder of the modern 'Psychology of Religion' movement. William James (1842–1910) is considered to be its founder with his seminal



William James in 1880

book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James's book has chapters on religious experience, saintliness, mysticism, and other topics, and quotes both Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. He cites two long references taken from Swamiji's 'Practical Vedanta', 'The Real and the Apparent Man', and most importantly, his book *Raja Yoga*.²³

When describing religious experiences, James displayed a knowledge of Eastern mysticism. Organised institutional religion is described as 'second-hand' compared to the true religion of the private mystical experience of an individual. The potentiality for other forms of consciousness and that such experience can impart exceptional meaning and truth-giving quality to the agent, is discussed.²⁴ James makes the contrast between the 'Religion of Healthy-Mindedness' and 'The Sick Soul' or 'Religion of Unhealthy-Mindedness'. While a healthy-minded religion is positive, emphasising religious experience, productive activity, and the glory of its founders; an unhealthy-minded religion focusses in on negative things like the evils and sins within society and individual people. Of course the great souls who are the founders of religion must point out the shortcomings of the devotees so they will work to overcome them.

In the writing of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James was no doubt influenced by Swamiji but we will probably never know to what extent. To give a few biographical examples, at the Cambridge [Massachusetts] Conferences held at Sara Bull's home, Swamiji made the acquaintance of James probably in October and definitely in December 1894. There is a possibility that at that time Swamiji demonstrated the nature of Divine communion to James by entering into samadhi in his presence. Soon after, Swamiji and James met at dinner at the residence of Sara Bull. 'After dinner the Swami and the professor drew together in earnest and subdued conversation. It was midnight when they rose from their long discourse.' Swamiji informed Mrs. Bull, who made inquiries about their long conversation, that James is 'A very nice man, a very nice man!'

It is quite likely that James attended Swamiji's eminent talk on 'The Vedanta Philosophy' presented before the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club on 25 March 1896. Before he gave the presentation, 'Mr. [James] Lough said that Vivekananda's addresses [his published pamphlets] interested not only the philosophical students, but also Prof. James and Prof. [Josiah] Royce, who hope to be at his Harvard talk.' Three days later James sent a letter to Swamiji addressing him as 'Dear Master', inviting him to lunch at his home. Swami Abhedananda wrote that Swamiji was offered the chair of Eastern Philosophy at Harvard University, which as a sannyasin he could not accept.²⁵ In a letter to Sara Bull dated 2 August 1900, James noted: 'I have just been reading some of Vivekananda's Addresses in England, which I had not seen. This man is simply a wonder for oratorical power. ... The Swami is an honour to humanity.' In a letter to Josephine MacLeod, James wrote that he 'might get hold of the first 3 parts of Practical

Vedanta', written by Swamiji. In James' library they discovered the works of Swamiji, Abhedananda, and Sister Nivedita.

Dr Eugene Irvine Taylor, an Associate in Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School made the following remarks. For Swamiji psychology

meant the spiritual evolution of consciousness, not simply the description of sense data and its analysis by the mind. ... internal science, concentration of mind means drawing consciousness back towards one's self—a process of involution, where consciousness is systematically detached from the various objects in the external world until the mind itself becomes the object of conscious absorption. Awareness is thereby cleansed or purified, so that consciousness, and hence personality, is transformed. This, he said, was yoga. ... [William James of Harvard University] saw in Vivekananda's inner science a vast unexplored dimension for the understanding of personality and character formation. We know from subsequent references he made to Vivekananda's system that James saw great value in the Hindu practice of systematic, daily periods of concentrated relaxation. These, James felt, could be of great use in preparing American children for learning in the classroom. James also observed in the methods of Vivekananda's yoga a form of spiritual discipline that could be used by anyone to penetrate into untapped reservoirs of energy and power for physical as well as mental tasks, and also in the treatment of certain neuroasthenic conditions.²⁶

Raja yoga psychology can be integrated with modern psychoanalytic theory. The practice of raja yoga strengthens the will and gives people the inner strength to face their problems so they can make the necessary changes in their thinking and actions to overcome their difficulties. It opens up a whole new world previously unknown to its practitioners. People engaged in yoga often peak at an older age than most people

do; certainly older than an athlete and even than an intellectual.

Two additional candidates for the founder of the modern 'Psychology of Religion' are J H Leuba (1868–1946) a fellow at Clark University, for an 1896 article on the religious conversion process; and Edwin D Starbuck (1866–1947) who received a PhD from Clark University in 1897, for a book titled *Psychology of Religion* (1899). Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts was a unique institution that had only graduate students. Its first President from 1889 to 1919 was Granville Stanley Hall (1844–1924), an esteemed educational psychologist, who was the first President of the American Psychological Association. Hall met Swamiji, probably at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, and later stated: 'His lectures here [in the US] have attracted considerable attention in some quarters.' It is quite possible that Swamiji had some effect on Hall, since in 1896 Swami Saradananda, and in 1899 and 1909 Abhedananda were invited to speak at Clark University. As part of a two-week conference held at Clark University beginning on 7 September 1909, Sigmund Freud gave five lectures on the subject of psychoanalysis. These are the only speeches he gave in the western hemisphere. Two days later, his companion Carl Jung presented the first of his three lectures at the University. The following Monday the featured speaker at the conference was Abhedananda who spoke on 'English Rule in India—As India Sees it', as part of an International Relations seminar.²⁷

Spiritual Experiences and the Verification Principle

Swamiji asked the question:

What is the proof of God? Direct perception, Pratyaksha. The proof of this wall is that I perceive it. God has been perceived that way by

thousands before, and will be perceived by all who want to perceive Him. But this perception is no sense-perception at all; it is supersensuous, superconscious.²⁸

People have been fighting for ages, and what is the outcome? Intellect cannot reach there at all. We have to go beyond the intellect; the proof of religion is in direct perception. The proof of the existence of this wall is that we see it; if you sat down and argued about its existence or non-existence for ages, you could never come to any conclusion; but directly you see it, it is enough (4.34).

The proof, therefore, of the Vedas is just the same as the proof of this table before me, Pratyaksha, direct perception. This I see with the senses, and the truths of spirituality we also see in a superconscious state of the human soul (3.253).

All knowledge must stand on perception of certain facts, and upon that we have to build our reasoning. But, curiously enough the vast majority of mankind think, especially at the present time, that no such perception is possible in religion, that religion can only be apprehended by vain arguments (1.150, 183; 2.162).

Sir Alfred Jules Ayer





Modern science calls this the 'Verification Principle,' developed by the prestigious British analytic philosopher Sir Alfred Jules Ayer (1910–89). Strong verification refers to observation-statements that are directly verifiable, that is, a statement can be shown to be correct by way of empirical observation. A principle begins as a hypothesis implied by a theory, which is then compared against empirical observations. If the hypothesis is consistently supported by data through empirical verification, it achieves the rank 'verified' principle. In *Language, Truth and Logic*, A J Ayer, an atheist and supporter of logical positivism, wrote that the mystic 'is unable to produce any intelligible propositions at all. ... mystical intuition is not a genuinely cognitive state. ... religious experience is altogether fallacious.'²⁹ Over fifty years later in June 1988, his attending physician Dr Jeremy George said that Ayer told him: 'I saw a Divine Being. I'm afraid I am going to have to revise all my various books and opinions.' This was a very unsettling experience for Ayer, since it went against his lifelong beliefs, biases, prejudices. Ayer had no idea that the verification principle could be applied to religion and that realising God is a matter of

direct perception and observation that surpasses theoretical constructs.³⁰

For example, Buddha established a new religion only after he attained the enlightened state of nirvana. Jesus Christ spoke with the Father in Heaven, perceived his presence, and received his messages. Prophet Muhammad received the Quran verbatim over a twenty-three-year period transmitted by the archangel Gabriel from a heavenly realm. Swami Brahmananda (1865–1922) could see Brahman or God within all people. Thus, the Verification Principle is the epistemological foundation of all of the major religions of the world.

As a young man, Swamiji, then Narendranath Datta, went around Calcutta asking prominent religious leaders like Devendranath Tagore: 'Sir, have you seen God?' Not, have you written a book on or delivered lectures about Brahman or God. From Sri Ramakrishna he got this response:

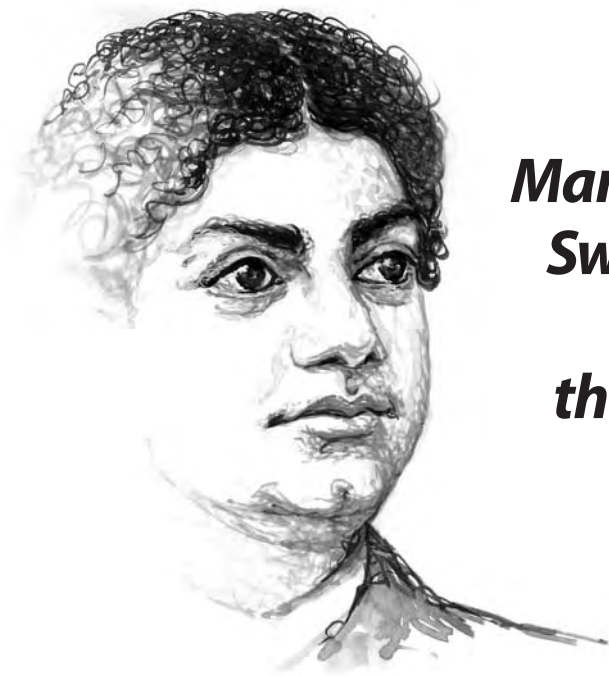
I crept near him and asked him the question which I had asked so often: 'Have you seen God, sir?' 'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intense sense. God can be realized,' he went on; 'one can see and talk to Him as I am seeing and talking to you. But who cares? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.' That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. As I heard these things from his lips, I could not but believe that he was saying them not like an ordinary preacher, but from the depths of his own realizations.³¹

PB

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Many Paths to One Goal: Swami Vivekananda's Contributions to the Discourse of Yoga

Jeffery D Long

Swamiji's Distinctive Perspective on Yoga

AMONG SWAMIJI'S many contributions to global spirituality, some of the most important, and also the least understood, are his contributions to the discourse of yoga: that is, to the understanding of what, precisely, yoga is, its aim and purpose, and the methods that it involves.

There are, of course, many interpretations of yoga, as well as many types of yoga. Indeed, the same thing can be said of yoga that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi once said of religion: 'In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals.'¹ Similarly, there are as many yogas as there are individuals. The intent of this essay is not to claim that Swamiji's approach to the nature of yoga is the only correct approach; nor, in claiming that his approach is distinctive; the intent is to state that this approach is entirely unique, and that important aspects of it are not also shared by other major thinkers on yoga.

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Indeed, precisely because his approach has been so influential, many of Swamiji's ideas on yoga are now widely shared around the world. This can lead to a situation, though, in which certain ideas come to be taken for granted, as if that is simply the way everyone has always thought. Credit needs to be given to Swamiji both for introducing yoga to the wider world beyond India in the modern period and for presenting the particular synthesis of practices now commonly known as 'the four yogas' in the particular way that he did.

It is also, true, though, that certain important ideas introduced by Swamiji to the West have been largely forgotten. There is thus a need to remind people that yoga is not *only* what most now see it to be. In the minds of most Westerners, the word 'yoga' refers specifically, often exclusively, to what scholars have come to call 'postural yoga.'² In more traditional terms, postural yoga refers to asanas, the postures one utilises while practising meditation; although, in modern postural yoga, meditation may or may not be involved at all, the postures themselves being utilised solely because of their benefits to physical health and their contributions to an overall sense of well-being for their practitioners. yoga has thus come to be seen and practised as part

of a physical health and exercise regimen. Certainly, in this regard, it is a deeply beneficial practice for many, many people, and is one of India's numerous gifts to global civilisation. If one takes the perspective on yoga, though, developed and promoted by Swamiji, this emphasis on physical postures comes to be seen as barely scratching the surface of the depths of yoga as a practice and as a way of life: and potentially, as a distraction from the experience of these depths, which are, according to Swamiji and the tradition he inherits and advances, the whole point of this practice. Indeed, while the care of the physical body is certainly important, an obsession with it can carry many spiritual dangers.

What are the features of Swamiji's approach to yoga? In terms of the modern conversation about the nature of yoga as being far more than postural practice, the first feature to mention is one that Swamiji's thought shares with yoga masters going back centuries: the aim of yoga as, to cite Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sutra*, '*chitta-vritti-nirodhah*', or the calming of the modifications of the mind—the thoughts, which can be likened to waves on the surface of a body of water.³ Picking up on a theme pursued by earlier masters in the tradition of Vedanta, Swamiji identifies the aim of yoga with the aim of Vedanta: namely, the attainment of God-realisation, the manifestation of the potential divinity within us and within all beings, a realisation which leads to liberation—moksha or mukti—from the cycle of rebirth, samsara, to which we have been subject for countless lifetimes. Physical health, from this perspective, is important as a condition which makes it possible for one to observe spiritual practice and attain this ultimate realisation. It is certainly not, however, an end in itself; for indeed, an excessive identification of self with the physical body is precisely the delusion which one must overcome

in order to be free from the cycle of rebirth. In fact, rebirth itself can be seen as simply the repeated identification of the self with a physical body: in this case, a series of physical bodies, given that such identification is no longer viable when a particular body ceases to function—when it experiences death. We will see that this, too—the central importance of non-identification with the physical body—is a major theme of Swamiji's teachings about yoga. Yoga is about God-realisation. Physical health, although important, is secondary.

Another major feature of Swamiji's approach to yoga is his emphasis on the diversity of the methods that yoga involves. While yoga, for Swamiji, is not only postural practice, it is also not only the practice of meditation prescribed in the *Yoga Sutra*. While this practice does hold, as we shall see, a special place in Swamiji's understanding of yoga as a whole, yoga also includes, for Swamiji, practices which the average Westerner would likely not think of at all in connection with yoga: namely, service to alleviate the sufferings of living beings, the practice of studying and learning to discern the difference between what is real and what is unreal in one's life, and loving devotion towards a personal form of divinity—the yoga practice which comes the closest to the idea of 'religion', at least in the Western world. yoga, in short, is, for Swamiji, a complete, comprehensive, and holistic way of life, encompassing every aspect of the human personality.

A common misunderstanding of Swamiji's approach to yoga involves setting it against an interpretation of Vedanta—particularly Advaita Vedanta—as involving only one way to the ultimate realisation: namely, jnana or Self-knowledge. As we shall see, though, this is a misreading of Swamiji's teachings. He does not teach that there are many ways to realisation, and that

Self-knowledge is just one of these. He teaches, rather, that there are many ways to the Self-knowledge that is the one way to—or rather, that *constitutes*—the ultimate realisation. Another way to say this is that the critics of Swamiji, who say that he deviates from traditional Advaita Vedanta in affirming many ways to realisation are confusing jnana or Self-knowledge, with jnana yoga, as a practice aimed at *cultivating* jnana through the purification of the mind. Swamiji's contribution is to emphasise other yogas, other practices, as well. But in his view

that jnana, Self-knowledge, is the essential prerequisite for realisation, indeed, that Self-knowledge *is* realisation, Swamiji is no different than any other teacher of Advaita Vedanta. Acharya Shankara and other teachers have also said that many practices can purify the mind and prepare it for realisation.

Other important features of Swamiji's approach to yoga include an emphasis on renunciation as an essential condition for the practice of yoga. In keeping with the spirit of the Bhagavadgita, though, he emphasises that by 'renunciation' he is referring not so much to formal *sannyasa*, in which one takes up the life of a monk or a nun, though this is of course recommended for those who are called to it. 'Renunciation', for Swamiji, means the inner attitude of detachment or *vairagya*, which can be either present or absent regardless of the outward appearance of a person. A monk can be deeply attached to the world and a king detached from it. The detached king, like King Janaka in ancient times, is closer to realisation than a monk, who is greedy for fame or recognition, or who is inwardly attached to the things he has outwardly renounced. Such renunciation is rejected by Swamiji as hypocrisy.

Swamiji also emphasises the importance of actually practising the yogas and not merely theorising about them. He insists that the yogas are not for the weak, but require firmness of mind and self-discipline in order to be effective in advancing us towards the goal that we seek. In regard to our modern period in particular, two distinctive features of Swamiji's approach to yoga include an emphasis on the rationality of yoga and on generosity as an essential virtue to cultivate in our current age. Yoga, and Vedanta more broadly, has been appealing especially to Westerners, but also to people around the world who are educated in the scientific



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method and in scepticism towards unverified claims, for the fact that it does not ask its practitioners to accept things on blind faith, but rather, to paraphrase Gandhi, to 'experiment with truth', to test the claims of tradition through practice, and by verifying the truths of Vedanta for oneself by seeing the results of this practice in one's life. In regard to generosity, and to service more broadly, a major contribution of Swamiji to the discourse of yoga is his emphasis on karma yoga not simply as ritualistic practice, but as service to suffering beings. Generosity, he says, is the chief virtue to cultivate in this era of history, the Kali Yuga, in which the kinds of heroic practice described in the scriptures are not possible for most spiritual aspirants. An act of kindness to a suffering person is of far greater value, according to Swamiji, for one's spiritual advancement than standing on one leg in a cave in the Himalayas.

Let us then look at each of these features of Swamiji's approach to yoga as they are found in his *Complete Works*.

Many Paths to One Goal

'You must remember', Swamiji states, 'that freedom of the soul is the goal of all Yogas, and each one equally leads to the same result.'⁴ Elsewhere, he says:

Our various Yogas do not conflict with each other; each of them leads us to the same goal and makes us perfect. ... Each one of our Yogas is fitted to make man perfect even without the help of the others, because they have all the same goal in view. The Yogas of work, of wisdom, and of devotion are all capable of serving as direct and independent means for the attainment of Moksha. 'Fools alone say that work and philosophy are different, not the learned.' The learned know that, though apparently different from each other, they at last lead to the same goal of human perfection (1.92–3).

Although yoga involves many different methods, many forms of practice, the goal of all of these is one and the same.

According to Swamiji:

The ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions, is but one—re-union with God, or, what amounts to the same, with the divinity which is every man's true nature. But while the aim is one, the method of attaining may vary with the different temperaments of men ... Both the goal and the methods employed for reaching it are called Yoga, a word derived from the same Sanskrit root as the English 'yoke', meaning 'to join', to join us to our reality, God. There are various such Yogas or methods of union—but the chief ones are—Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, and Jnana-Yoga (5.292).

It is significant that Swamiji here connects the concepts of religion and yoga. Both 'religion' and 'yoga' are, in their etymological roots, connected with the idea of 'union' or 're-union'. The Latin root of 'religion', *religare*, literally means 'to bind, to tie'. Similarly, the Sanskrit root of the word 'yoga', *yuj*, also means 'yoke, unite'. In their initial meanings, both words refer to the literal act of tying, binding, or yoking—such as yoking an ox to a cart or tying a cow to a post. But both words have gradually come to mean a 'binding' or 'yoking' of a more profound kind: the binding or yoking of the individual self to its divine source. Though it has become popular to translate the English word 'religion' as 'dharma' or *dharm* in the Indic languages such as Hindi, it is more true to the original meanings of both 'religion' and 'yoga' to translate 'religion' as 'yoga'. Both words refer to the practices and total way of life employed in taking one to one's ultimate goal: to God-realisation. Both vary in practice because, as Swamiji says, 'while the aim is one, the method of attaining it may vary with the different temperaments of men.' Again, 'In reality,

there are as many religions as there are individuals'.⁵ This emphasis on religious pluralism, the idea of many true and effective paths to the realisation of our inherent, potential divinity, shows Swamiji's debt to his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, whose central message was '*Yato mat, tato path*; as many faiths, so many paths' or each religion is a path to the realisation of God.

Again, the reason for the great variety of practices is the variety in human beings:

Every man must develop according to his own nature. As every science has its methods, so has every religion. The methods of attaining the end of religion are called Yoga by us, and the different forms of Yoga that we teach, are adapted to the different natures and temperaments of men. We classify them in the following way, under four heads:

(1) Karma-Yoga—The manner in which a man realizes his own divinity through works and duty.

(2) Bhakti-Yoga—The realization of the divinity through devotion to, and love of, a Personal God.

(3) Raja-Yoga—The realization of the divinity through the control of mind.

(4) Jnana-Yoga—The realization of a man's own divinity through knowledge.⁶

Swamiji again connects the diversity of yogas with the diversity of religions: 'These are all different roads leading to the same centre—God. Indeed, the varieties of religious belief are an advantage, since all faiths are good, so far as they encourage man to lead a religious life. The more sects there are, the more opportunities there are for making successful appeals to the divine instinct in all men' (ibid.). The diversity of yogas and the diversity of religions arise from the same source: the diversity of human natures and temperaments as we each strive for the realisation of our divinity.

'Yoga means the method of joining man and God. When you understand this, you can go on with your own definitions of man and God, and you will find the term Yoga fits in with every definition. Remember always, there are different yogas for different minds, and that if one does not suit you, another may' (6.41). Swamiji is here enjoining a non-dogmatic attitude in our approach to this question of yoga and its ultimate purpose. If one finds that a particular method for realising one's divinity does not work, perhaps due to one's specific life circumstances, or perhaps due to other factors, such as culture, or one's previous experiences with religion, then other methods are available. It is not the quest for God-realisation itself that is to be abandoned; but rather, one might need to adopt another method for achieving this realisation. Even terms like 'God' or 'realisation' may not be suitable for some people. For many, the word 'God' implies a personal being who is in charge of the universe, and they find this concept incoherent with their understanding of science or on the basis of their own life experiences. For others, 'realisation' may sound too impersonal or isolated. They may prefer terms like 'loving union', 'receiving divine grace', or 'salvation'. It does not matter, ultimately, how one speaks of or conceptualises these things, according to Swamiji, so long as the method one uses is effective in drawing one nearer to the goal.

An example that Swamiji gives of the diversity of yogas being rooted in the diversity of human characteristics is jnana yoga, which we already seen him define: 'The realization of a man's own divinity through knowledge' (ibid.). 'The object of Jnana-Yoga', he says, 'is the same as that of Bhakti and Raja Yogas, but the method is different. This is the Yoga for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational' (8.3). By 'the strong', Swamiji does not here mean

that the practitioners of either bhakti yoga or raja yoga—the disciplines, respectively, of devotion and meditation—are, in some sense, weak. But this yoga is for those who are confident in their own ability to reason through and to discern the reality of God through the powers of the intellect.

In bhakti yoga, one relies, instead, upon the grace of God, conceived as a being outside of oneself—though God is, on a Vedantic understanding, the Self beyond, or at the deepest level within, the empirical personality or ego that we normally think of as our ‘self’. Certainly one may distinguish, even in Advaita Vedanta, with its non-dualistic perspective, between the true Self and the false; for indeed, the practice of non-duality rests on this very distinction. In bhakti, the lower or false self is not so much unreal as it is derivative from and dependent upon the divine Self—that is, God—who is conceived as the loving saviour who rescues one from the sufferings of this world. And in raja yoga, one sets aside the lower self entirely, focusing solely on the divinity within, to the exclusion of all else. In jnana yoga, the ego and intellect remain intact, but they deconstruct themselves through a rational process that leads, in the end, to the same realisation as the methods of devotion and meditation. Each of these paths is for a different personality type. Some are more intellectually inclined and confident in their ability to reason things through. Others are of a more emotional disposition, and need to rely on a personal saviour. And others are mystically inclined, wanting to set aside everything and have the direct experience of inwardness. And we can mention here as well the workers—the karma yogis—whose motivation is to get something done. Even this inclination can be channelled towards the highest goal, through the practice of *seva*: selfless service.

As mentioned previously, a common misunderstanding of Swamiji is that, in affirming the diversity of the yogas, he is departing from earlier Advaitic thinkers, like Acharya Shankara—who see moksha as arising from jnana or Self-knowledge alone—and claiming that it can arise from other sources, such as work, devotion, or meditation. This, however, is not correct; for, as Swamiji has clearly said: ‘It is evident ... that until we realize ourselves as the Absolute, we cannot attain to deliverance’ (8.152). Realising ourselves as the Absolute—that is, jnana—is the essential prerequisite for liberation from the cycle of rebirth. But jnana is not the same as jnana *yoga*. As Swamiji continues, ‘Yet there



are various ways of attaining to this realization. These methods have the generic name of yoga (to join, to join ourselves to our reality). These yogas, though divided into various groups, can principally be classed into four; and as each is only a method leading indirectly to the realization of the Absolute, they are suited to different temperaments' (ibid.).

Swamiji is also at one with earlier traditions—not only Vedanta, but also the philosophies of Sankhya and yoga, as well as Jainism and Buddhism—in affirming that nothing is really, in any literal sense, 'attained' in God-realisation. It is conventional to speak of 'attaining' or 'achieving' liberation, and also of 'merging', attaining 'union with', or 'becoming one with' the divine reality. But Swamiji clarifies this issue: 'Now it must be remembered that it is not that the assumed man becomes the real man or Absolute. There is no becoming with the Absolute. It is ever free, ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered its nature for a time is to be removed. Therefore the whole scope of all systems of yoga (and each religion represents one) is to clear up this ignorance and allow the Atman to restore its own nature' (ibid.). One does not so much 'become one' with the Absolute as realise that one was already the Absolute all along. The perception of 'becoming' is only relative. One could compare it to the perception that the sun is rising above the horizon, when the reality is that the earth is rotating. What is experienced or explained as a 'becoming one' with the Absolute is the realisation of the unity that was already always present. This is also why Swamiji frequently speaks of the 'potential divinity' of all living beings. Divinity is already present, and is indeed the true reality. But it needs to be 'realised' or 'actualised' in the sense of being made fully manifest in our waking consciousness.

The Meaning and Necessity of Renunciation

In order to manifest our divinity, it is necessary to get rid of that which impedes its being fully manifested to us. This is our ego and many attachments that maintain its grip upon us. So we need to relinquish the ego in order to become liberated. As Swamiji says, 'The chief help in this liberation are Abhyasa and Vairagya. Vairagya is non-attachment to life, because it is the will to enjoy that brings all this bondage in its train; and Abhyasa is constant practice of any one of the yogas' (ibid.). Both of these—*vairagya* and *abhyasa*—are major emphases of Swamiji's approach to yoga. We shall speak first of *vairagya*: renunciation. What does Swamiji mean when he refers to renunciation? Does this mean we must all become sannyasis in order to be liberated? This is often how the classical Vedanta tradition has been interpreted.

The centrality of *vairagya* to Swamiji's approach to yoga cannot be overstated. 'Vairagya or renunciation is the turning point in all the various yogas' (3.19). 'In all our Yogas this renunciation is necessary. This is the stepping-stone and the real centre and the real heart of all spiritual culture—renunciation. This is religion—renunciation' (3.71).

It is significant, though, that the term which Swamiji translates as 'renunciation', *vairagya*, is more often translated as 'detachment', such as when the Gita refers to karma-*phala-vairagya* or 'detachment from the fruits of action'.⁷ The matter becomes clarified if we realise that Swamiji is referring to this attitude of non-attachment—to *vairagya*—when he speaks about the need for renunciation in relation to the yogas. This becomes particularly clear in the following passage from his *Complete Works*:

Non-attachment is the basis of all the yogas. The man who gives up living in houses, wearing

fine clothes, and eating food, and goes into the desert, may be a most attached person. His only possession, his own body, may become everything to him; and as he lives he will simply be struggling for the sake of his body. Non-attachment does not mean anything that we may do in relation to our external body, it is all in the mind. The binding link of 'I and mine' is in the mind. If we have not this link with the body and with the things of the senses, we are non-attached, wherever and whatever we may be. A man may be on a throne and perfectly non-attached; another man may be in rags and still very much attached.⁸

The necessary foundation for the practice of any of the yogas is thus a detached attitude and not the formal practice of renunciation in which one becomes a monk or a nun, though such a formal renunciation is of course available and recommended to those who are drawn to it. But even a person who is, to all appearances, deeply involved in the affairs of this world may be an advanced yogi according to Swamiji. This is of course consistent with the Hindu scriptures, in which a figure such as King Janaka is described as *jivanmukta*, liberated while still embodied. Such a goal is, of course, difficult to achieve. The point is that one cannot judge from the outward appearance of a person's mode of living whether they are on the spiritual path or not.

The Special Role of Raja Yoga

Why does Swamiji speak of the yoga of meditation as the 'raja yoga', the royal path? Is there something special about this particular yoga?

It would be incorrect to say that Swamiji views any one of the four yogas as the only way to God-realisation. As we have already seen him state, 'The Yogas of work, of wisdom, and of devotion [karma yoga, jnana yoga, and bhakti yoga] are all capable of serving as direct and independent means for the attainment of Moksha' (1.92–3). The other three yogas, apart from meditation, can each lead, on its own, to the Self-knowledge, jnana, which gives rise to liberation. Each of these yogas serves, in its own way, to



purify the minds of those who practise it. Each leads to the transformation of the ego, clearing away its obscuring qualities and rendering it a transparent medium through which the light of the infinite divinity within each of us might shine through.

Swamiji does, however, seem to have special partiality towards the yoga of meditation. At one point, he even says of meditation that, 'The other Yogas that we read and hear of, do not deserve to be ranked with the excellent Mahayoga in which the Yogi finds himself and the whole universe as God. This is the highest of all Yogas' (1.189).

What is the reason for Swamiji's apparent partiality to the raja yoga? It is because the raja yoga has a particular ability to support all of the other yogas and is, in a sense, foundational to them all. 'This yoga [raja yoga] fits in with every one of these yogas. It fits inquirers of all classes with or without any belief, and it is the real instrument of religious inquiry. As each science has its particular method of investigation, so is this Raja-Yoga the method of religion' (8.154).

Whichever yoga is predominant in one's spiritual practice, the raja yoga can support one in that practice. The practice of meditation energises and steadies the mind, giving it greater focus and thus making it firmer and more able to support any activity in which one is engaged, whether that be work, devotional activity, or study.

Harmonising the Yogas

This also brings us to yet another important feature of Swamiji's approach to yoga, which is the fact that the various yogas need not be practised in isolation. Indeed, Swamiji recommends that one draw upon and harmonise all of the yogas, to some extent, in one's practice. Each of these practices supports the others, enabling one to move more effectively towards the goal of

God-realisation. Indeed, Swamiji says:

Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. Everyone who has only one or two of these elements of character, I consider 'one-sided'; and this world is almost full of such 'one-sided' men, with knowledge of that one road only in which they move; and anything else is dangerous and horrible to them. To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga—union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by Yoga (2.388).

Elsewhere, when Swamiji says, 'A harmony of the four kinds of Yogas must be practiced', a questioner asks, 'What do you mean by the harmony of the four yogas?' Swamiji replies: 'Discrimination between the real and the unreal, dispassion and devotion, work and practices in concentration' (7.277). Regarding the fact that each of these yogas supports the others, to one disciple, Swamiji says of karma yoga that, 'Without spiritual practices you will never be able to do this Karma-Yoga. You must harmonize the four different yogas; otherwise how can you always keep your mind and heart wholly on the Lord?' (7.274). Devotion, study, and work support one another, and meditation supports them all. One may predominate, but all are helpful to the spiritual life.

Work Is Worship: Karma Yoga as Selfless Service

One particularly well-known contribution of Swamiji to the discourse of yoga is his emphasis



on selfless service—working for the good of all beings—as a type of spiritual practice under the rubric of karma yoga.

This was somewhat controversial in Swamiji's lifetime. It marked a departure from a long-held view that the 'work' described in the Gita referred exclusively to ritual activity, rather than to actions aimed at alleviating the sufferings of others. In the *Complete Works*, there is a dialogue in which a questioner asks Swamiji specifically about this issue:

Q.—It is generally said that work according to the Gita means the performance of Vedic sacrifices and religious exercises; any other kind of work is futile.

Swamiji: All right; but you must make it more comprehensive. Who is responsible for every action you do, every breath you take, and

every thought you think? Isn't it you yourself?

The friend: Yes and no. I cannot solve this clearly. The truth about it is that man is the instrument and the Lord is the agent. So when I am directed by His will, I am not at all responsible for my actions.

Swamiji: Well, that can be said only in the highest state of realization. When the mind will be purified by work and you will *see* that it is He who is causing all to work, then only you will have a right to speak like that (7.274).

Swamiji here adds an important corrective to a popular interpretation of the Gita, according to which one essentially surrenders all responsibility for one's actions to the divine. As Swamiji says here, one can truly perceive oneself as solely the instrument of the divine when one has reached the highest state of realisation.

Until then, though, it requires a constant effort to rein in one's ego and take responsibility for one's actions, living in a way that is worthy of the divine reality within. This involves the cultivation of the moral virtues, as well as showing compassion to others. Indeed, according to Swamiji, compassion and generosity are the virtues most appropriate to the period of history through which humanity is currently passing. He says: 'The Tapas and the other hard Yogas that were practiced in other Yugas [historical epochs] do not work now. What is needed in this Yuga is giving, helping others. What is meant by Dana? The highest of gifts is the giving of spiritual knowledge, the next is the giving of secular knowledge, and the last is giving food and drink' (3.134). These are the activities that Swamiji made central for the Ramakrishna Mission, which he established in India in 1897, upon his return from his first journey to the West. The giving of spiritual knowledge—the teaching of Vedanta and yoga, as well as other philosophies, in the spirit of pluralism—is its highest duty. This is done when monks, nuns, and even some laypersons, give spiritual talks in Vedanta centres throughout the world. Secular knowledge is given in the schools and universities that have been established by the Ramakrishna Mission throughout India. Finally, food and drink, and, we might add, medicine, are given in the Mission's outreach to the poor.

Yoga and Rationality

In an era when religion is frequently—and often, quite rightly—criticised for being irrational, Swamiji emphasises that the true practice of yoga is *not* of this kind, suggesting that we should be wary of those who would present it as such. 'No one of these Yogas gives up reason, no one of them asks you to be hoodwinked, or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests

of any type whatsoever. No one of them asks you that you should give your allegiance to any superhuman messenger. Each one of them tells you to cling to your reason, to hold fast to it' (2.388–9). 'The first test of true teaching must be, that the teaching should not contradict reason. And you may see that such is the basis of all these yogas' (2.390). One can see this philosophy at work in the non-dogmatic approach of the Ramakrishna tradition in theological matters. There is no orthodoxy to which one must give assent in order to take up this practice. It is a matter of one's own reason and experience.

One must, however, practice in order to have the experiences that give one the basis for making assertions about the nature of spiritual life. This brings us to another important feature of Swamiji's approach to yoga.

Being and Becoming: The Necessity of Practice for Realisation

Lastly, it is imperative that all these various yogas should be carried out in practice; mere theories about them will not do any good. First we have to hear about them, then we have to think about them. We have to reason the thoughts out, impress them on our minds, and we have to meditate on them, realize them, until at last they become our whole life. No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas or theories, nor an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self. By means of intellectual assent we may today subscribe to many foolish things and change our minds altogether tomorrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion (2.396).

In his recommendation that we must first hear about the yogas, then think about them,

and finally, meditate on them and realise them, Swamiji is echoing the ancient practice of jnana yoga in the Advaita Vedanta tradition: the succession of *shravana*, hearing and assimilation; *manana*, contemplation; and *nididhyasana*, meditative realisation. We hear these teachings, we reflect upon them rationally, and then we practise them in order to realise them directly.

Not for the Weak!

Finally, to return to the modern identification of yoga with postural practice, Swamiji notes that physical health does, indeed, play an important role in spiritual life, as a condition for the practice of any of the yogas. ‘When the miserably weak attempt any of the Yogas, they are likely to get some incurable malady, or they weaken their minds. Voluntarily weakening the body is really no prescription for spiritual enlightenment’ (3.70). One must not be obsessed with the body; but it is the vehicle for one’s spiritual realisation and must be cared for accordingly. Modern postural practice can thus be seen, from the perspective of Swamiji, as marking the *beginning* of spiritual life: as preparation for practices aimed at the realisation of our divine potential.

Conclusion

Swamiji’s contributions to the discourse of yoga are many. Some of the points that he makes reiterate ancient views of the Vedanta and yoga traditions, such as the necessity of non-attachment, and the character and unity of the ultimate goal. Others are his innovations or are new ways of articulating ancient truths implicit in the work of earlier thinkers, such as the variety of the paths to the infinite, and the importance of service. Swamiji articulates a view of yoga that is comprehensive: a holistic way of life leading to fulfilment and peace of mind, and the realisation of our highest potential.



Notes and References

1. Cited from *A Sourcebook of Modern Hinduism*, ed. Glyn Richards (Richmond: Curzon, 1985), 156.
2. This terminology has been promoted in particular by scholar Mark Singleton. See Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010).
3. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.55. It should be noted that Swamiji, characteristically of the authors of his time, uses the terms ‘man’ and ‘men’ to speak of humanity and human beings. Though this is jarring to contemporary sensibilities, he should not be taken as referring exclusively to males. There is abundant evidence from his life and writings that he viewed women and men as equally capable of achieving God-realisation. Interestingly, his native Bengali language is genderless, and thus better suited than the English of his time for conveying the expansive perspective of his thought.
5. *A Sourcebook of Modern Hinduism*, 156.
6. *Complete Works*, 5.292.
7. *Gita*, 2.47.
8. *Complete Works*, 1.101.



America Is a Nation of Yogis

Philip Goldberg

THE RECENT HISTORY of yoga in America is marked by the ascendancy of hatha yoga. Specifically, a multi-billion-dollar industry has been built on what some have called postural yoga, meaning a yoga dominated by the stretches and bends of asana practice. A visitor to the great majority of yoga studios, which now seem as ubiquitous as coffee shops, will find that most of the classes consist almost entirely of asanas, conducted in a sequence that depends on the teacher's lineage or preferred style. Magazine covers, advertisements, and articles about the benefits of yoga almost always depict an attractive person, usually female, in an asana posture that most of humanity would find it impossible to achieve.

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So popular has asana practice become that, in the public mind, it is now the very definition of the word yoga. Few are aware that yoga is defined as a state of consciousness—Patanjali's 'cessation of the fluctuations of the mind', the Gita's 'knowing the Self by the Self alone'—as well as a repertoire of practices designed to cultivate that unitive state of being. Meditation practices are now mainstream in the West, although widely misunderstood, but seldom are they understood as forms of yoga. Lost in the glare and glamour of asanas is the fact that most yogic texts that Americans are familiar with, devote vastly more space to mental disciplines than to physical practices, just as most of the gurus who have illuminated the Western spiritual landscape gave far more attention to meditation than to asana. And yet, the physical positions that have historically

been used to prepare the practitioner for deep meditation are now the *entirety* of yoga in the minds of many.

Sincere American yogis lament the disconnection of the word yoga from its deeper meaning and deplore the widespread disregard of yoga's spiritual purpose. The situation would no doubt disturb Swami Vivekananda as well. He sometimes derided the hatha yoga of his era in Bengal as 'nothing but a kind of gymnastics'.¹ He praised the system as an aid to health and vitality, but decried its fixation on the body and its focus on longevity and fitness as ends in themselves. 'A banyan tree lives sometimes 5000 years, but it is a banyan tree and nothing more,' he said. 'So, if a man lives long, he is only a healthy animal' (1.138). Jeffery Long, an American scholar of religion and a Vedanta Society devotee, says that Swamiji 'was not opposed to physical or bodily practices per se, but wanted to insist on these things being in the service of God-realisation'. He adds that Swamiji may also have wanted to counter the common image of 'circus yogis, who could do all kinds of contortions but were not particularly spiritual'.

I suspect that Swamiji's position would be similar to that of the prominent gurus and swamis who followed in his footsteps in the West. By and large, they emphasised that yoga's highest priority is union with the Divine—God-realisation, moksha, liberation, or whatever term each one preferred—and if the aspirant finds hatha yoga an aid to that attainment, all well and good. Most encouraged simple asana and pranayama practices as preparation for meditation, and some opined that Westerners especially would find the physical practices spiritually beneficial because of their high stress levels. They would have agreed with Swamiji that aspirants should not put the physical cart before the spiritual horse—or worse, ignore the horse entirely.

Paramahansa Yogananda, who achieved great prominence in America, a generation after Swamiji—and remains prominent thanks to the publication of his iconic *Autobiography of a Yogi*—was most certainly in the same camp.² A fellow Bengali who was born in the year of Swamiji's triumph at the World's Parliament of Religions, Yogananda spent his teen years a short walk from Swamiji's birthplace in Calcutta, and he was strongly influenced by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda legacy. In his three decades in America, he emphasised meditation above all else, while also promoting physical practices—both the systems he developed and traditional asanas—to improve health and prime the nervous system for meditation.

The well-known gurus of the 1960s and 70s followed suit. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who was thrust into global fame when the Beatles became devotees, was laser-focussed on his Transcendental Meditation method, but he quietly advocated asana and pranayama before meditation. Swami Muktananda had a similar approach, as did many others of that era and most of the current crop. Swamis Satchidananda and Vishnu-devananda, both disciples of Swami Sivananda Sarasvati of Rishikesh, focussed much more on asana and pioneered the training of Western yoga teachers, but they never divorced physical practice from the other limbs of classical yoga. Even the most prominent exponents and technicians of asana practice, B K S Iyengar and K Patthabhi Jois, both disciples of the celebrated Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, did not ignore the fullness of yoga philosophy and yogic precepts.

The asana takeover began in the 1980s and gradually accelerated, as the health and fitness benefits became known and more and more Americans were trained as teachers. Demand grew with every magazine article, every eye-catching advertisement, every celebrity

endorsement, and the opening of every fashionable yoga studio. To meet the demand—and, not incidentally, to generate income—yoga studios stepped up teacher training aggressively. As a result, standards declined; the importance of grounding in long-term practice and spiritual maturity was ignored; direct contact with Indian gurus and lineages diminished; and new approaches to practice were invented and branded. In time, the physicality of asanas came to usurp all other aspects of yoga, relegating philosophy to the periphery and eclipsing spiritual realisation through meditation as the centrepiece of the yogic repertoire.

More than 100,000 Americans can now claim to be qualified yoga teachers. Veteran teachers and practitioners, especially those who studied in India or with an Indian yoga acharya in the US, are deeply concerned about what they see as a decline in the quality of training, the inadequate skills and knowledge base of many younger teachers, and the disconnection from lineage and yoga's perennial roots. Of equal or greater concern is the cultural trend that equates yoga with slim, leotard-clad women, for women are by far the majority of practitioners, stretching on a yoga mat. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that America is doing to yoga what it has done to food: turning a precious gift of life into a commodity, favouring convenience and commercialism over quality, nourishment, and traditional standards. Trying to keep yoga's spiritual dimension from being submerged by physicality often feels like a struggle against a powerful tide.

That is the disturbing news. However, there are strong countervailing tendencies that offer good reasons to be optimistic about the future of yoga in the West. And the long arc of history supports that optimism.

In a sense, what has happened to yoga in America is nothing new. Like music or

technology, spiritual teachings have always found their way to new cultures, where they take on new and different forms. Indigenous traditions also become modified in various ways over time, as cultural norms change. From Swamiji onwards, all the gurus who brought the essence of Vedanta and yoga to the West made adaptations, adjusting their language, their emphasis, their method of delivery, and their teaching methods to accommodate cultural differences and to reach a larger audience than they would have had they taught in America the way they would teach in India. But they made those adaptations with skill, care, and integrity. They greeted the new seekers they encountered with empathy, addressing their various needs, desires, values, and levels of understanding without diluting or distorting the teachings themselves and without losing sight of the higher purpose of the traditions they represented. If Americans were drawn to yoga or meditation merely to improve their health or to run their business more creatively, the gurus spoke to those needs, and *also* let them know about the possibility of inner liberation and God consciousness. And they did so while humbly honouring their traditions and their profound debt to the rishis and avatars from whom India's venerable wisdom is derived.

That is still the case in the most reputable corners of modern yoga, where Westerner teachers continue to uphold the standards of their own gurus and the founders of their lineages. Many are deeply grounded in yogic philosophy and classic texts; they have been practising for decades, and have taught almost as long; they have made pilgrimages to India and immersed themselves in sadhana. In fact, such teachers are far more prevalent than might be assumed based on the most visible images of yoga in the media. Their asana-oriented classes may be their bread and butter, but they also offer yogic



upgrades—philosophy lessons, meditation instructions, kirtan programmes, and the like—for seekers who know that the tradition offers more than physical exercise.

Along those same lines, many organisations founded by earlier waves of gurus still thrive. They are not always referenced when people speak or write about yoga because the word is not necessarily part of their institutional identities. But they have been teaching the essence of yoga philosophy and practice—and, of course, Vedanta—for many decades. The legacy of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji is alive and well in Vedanta Society centres in most major cities. Yogananda's Self Realization Fellowship—and smaller breakaway organisations teaching in his name, such as Ananda Sangha—have an active presence throughout the country; his autobiography and other books by and about him, such as my own, *The Life of Yogananda*,³ continue to be published. Likewise, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's TM organisation has centres everywhere and is in the news frequently thanks in large part to a continuous flow of scientific data on the technique. Centres, ashrams, retreat centres,

and other institutional structures built on the work of Swamis Muktananda, Satchidananda, and Vishnudevananda, as well as Srila Prabhupada's Krishna Consciousness movement (ISKCON), and others, also continue to flourish. And, of course, contemporary gurus such as Mata Amritanandamayi, Sri Karunamayi, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev have established footholds in America and visit frequently. Such is the unfortunate conflation of 'yoga' with asana practice that the ongoing contributions of these teachers and organisations—whose emphasis on meditation, philosophical enquiry, devotional practices, and spiritual awakening could not be more yogic—are seldom referenced when yoga in the West is discussed.

An even more subtle and subterranean phenomenon must also be factored in. Countless numbers of Americans are Vedantins and yogis in spirit, if not in name. The transmission of Vedic wisdom that began with imported books and journals about a century before Swamiji's epic appearance has, over time, come to permeate America's spiritual landscape. As I chronicled in *American Veda*,⁴ it spread through a

variety of means: the printed word; the series of swamis, gurus, and yoga acharyas who came from India; the Americans who were trained to propagate the teachings of Indic lineages; Western scholars, scientists, poets, novelists, artists, and spiritual innovators; religious leaders who reinterpreted their own faith traditions in light of what they learned from the East; scientists whose research on the benefits of yogic methods have influenced medicine and psychology; and ordinary seekers who spread the message in both explicit and implicit ways. As a result of these myriad streams and tributaries, Vedanta and yoga permeate the soil of America, in large measure invisibly.

In 2009, an article appeared in *Newsweek* magazine with the provocative title 'We Are All Hindus Now'. The reporter noted that 'recent poll data show that conceptually, at least, we are slowly becoming more like Hindus and less like traditional Christians in the ways we think about God, our selves, each other, and eternity'.⁵ The principal research referenced in the article showed that a majority of Americans have come to agree that Truth is One and the wise call it by many names, and that there are many valid pathways to the Divine.

As insightful as it was, the *Newsweek* article did not quite get to the heart of the issue. By using a term most readers associate with religion, that is, 'Hindu', and by focusing on beliefs in a framework resembling comparative theology, the writer failed to appreciate the degree to which the trends she portrayed transcend conventional religion. A more accurate title would have been 'We Are All Yogis Now'.

This is the underappreciated story of the transmission of Indian wisdom to the West. America has become increasingly a nation of yogis, and those who fill asana classes each day are just a small part of it. Over the past few decades,

every survey of religious and spiritual perspectives finds that a greater number of Americans see the world in a manner consistent with the core precepts of Vedanta and yoga. They recognise the essential unity that underlies and permeates the diversity of the manifest world; they acknowledge that this ultimate reality is Divine and that the same divinity dwells in every human being; they seek to awaken to that innermost Self and express its nature in their worldly lives; they agree that there are as many pathways to Self-realisation as there are names for it, and no one path is right for everyone. More than at any previous time in history, Americans are turning away from religious dogma and towards inner exploration as the centrepiece of a spiritual life, and they are far more likely to adopt practices that elicit authentic spiritual experience. There are many reasons for these developments, but perhaps the most salient is access to the spiritual methodologies that originated with the Himalayan yogis.

People such as the ones I described deserve to be called yogis. They may never set foot on a yoga mat; they may not be flexible enough to touch their knees, let alone their toes. But they are yogis because they actively seek the unitive consciousness that is the hallmark of yoga. They can be found in a variety of places, not only in yoga studios and meditation centres, or in ashrams, or in the Hindu temples that now dot the American landscape, or at famous retreat centres like the Esalen Institute in California or the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Massachusetts. Many count themselves part of the fastest-growing category in American religion: the so-called 'Spiritual But Not Religious', also known as the Unaffiliated or the spiritually independent. These seekers do not identify with one religious tradition, but they take their inner lives seriously and they find


useful knowledge wherever they can. They can be found meditating at home alone, or on a beach, or in a park, or in a therapist's office, or on a Sunday morning in one of the many non-conventional houses of worship in America. In that last category are places like Unity Church and the Centres for Spiritual Living, the two most popular branches of the New Thought movement that was launched over a century ago by people who were directly inspired by the sacred texts of India—Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, who founded the Unity Churches, heard Swamiji speak in Chicago, in 1893.

Most remarkably, many of these unofficial yogis *do* identify with a Western religious tradition. They may attend church or synagogue regularly, but they've learned—often from priests, ministers, and rabbis who were influenced by the Indic traditions—that the promise of every religion finds its fulfilment in the kind of inner transformation the rishis described centuries ago. Indeed, one of the most surprising and significant results of the India-to-America flow of ideas and practices has been the rediscovery of Christian and Jewish mysticism—and, to a lesser extent, the Sufi branch of Islam. This development began in the 1970s, when members of the clergy were dismayed to see youngsters leaving their traditions to be with gurus and lamas and roshis, or to leave home for ashrams in India. They wanted to offer the same deep spiritual experiences that the Eastern teachers did, and their enquiry led them to imitate yogic methods—as in using Hebrew or Latin words as mantras—and to dust off long-hidden Jewish and Christian mystical teachings and democratise meditative practices whose use had been limited to monasteries.

All of this has created a large contingent groups of practitioners and seekers who might legitimately be called secular yogis, Christian yogis,

Jewish yogis, and none-of-the-above yogis. When you think about it, that creative, expansive, inclusive diversity centred in direct experience is not only very American, it is very yogic.

Vedanta and yoga have found welcome soil in America because they appeal to classic American values of independence, freedom, pragmatism, and evidence-based knowledge. Yes, there has always been resistance to those who imported India's treasures, but over time the open-minded, practical, and inclusive Americans overruled the closed-minded, bigoted, and exclusivist ones. That, in addition to the reasons already cited, is why I am optimistic about the future of American yoga.

In the long run, I am confident that the many Americans who humbly give thanks to India's spiritual heritage, and who deeply value the core teachings of yoga, will make sure the tradition is appreciated in its fullness and not reduced to just another form of exercise. Exactly what forms it will take on in the future is hard to predict, but yoga—like the wisdom of Vedanta—will no doubt continue to enjoy a prominent and permanent place in American life and, in the process, change the culture for the better. 

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 6.233.
2. See Paramahansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Los Angeles: Self Realization Fellowship, 2013).
3. See Philip Goldberg, *The Life of Yogananda* (Carlsbad: Hay House, 2018).
4. See Philip Goldberg, *American Veda* (New York: Harmony, 2010).
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Sankhya-Yoga Philosophy and the Mind-Body Problem

Paul Schweizer

THE RELATIONSHIP between the physical body and the human mind has been a deeply problematic topic for centuries. Physicalism is the 'orthodox' metaphysical stance in contemporary Western thought, wherein reality is held to be exclusively physical or material in nature. However, in the West, theoretical dissatisfaction with this type of approach has historically lead to Cartesian dualism, wherein mind and body are thought to belong to distinct and independent metaphysical realms. In the current discussion I compare and contrast this standard Western approach with

an alternative form of dualism developed in the *Sankhya*-Yoga philosophical tradition, wherein matter and pure consciousness are held to belong to distinct realms, but where the mind is placed on the *material* side of the ontological divide. I argue that this model possesses a number of theoretical advantages over Cartesian dualism, and constitutes a compelling theoretical framework for re-conceptualising the mind-body problem.

The Mind-Body Problem

When Western scientific investigations began uncovering the physical mechanisms underlying conscious sensory experience, a deep conceptual problem immediately came to the fore. Experimental analysis revealed a systematic correlation between, for example, the frequency of sound

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waves propagated through the atmosphere and our perception of high versus low musical notes. And the different frequencies of visible light were systematically correlated with our perception of different colours. Furthermore, anatomical research revealed various physiological aspects of our sensory organs that encode these salient features of the environmental stimulus and transmit them through the central nervous system. There was clearly a fundamental association between the environmental stimulus and anatomy of our sensory mechanisms, on the one hand, and our subjective conscious experience, on the other. Yet it seemed entirely mysterious how the one could be equated with or even give rise to the other. How could the sentient, first person, qualitative realm of experience stem from or be identical to physiological activities occurring in the sense organs and brain? The basic nature and characteristics of the two types of phenomena appear to be totally disjoint when viewed in their own terms. This seemingly fundamental disparity remains one of the main challenges to a purely physicalist worldview.

Cartesian dualistic ontologies constitute a standard alternative model, wherein the two realms are postulated to be separate and independent, but to progress through time in parallel. This theoretical picture accommodates both the detected correlation between phenomenological and physical events, as well as the basic intuition that the two realms are nonetheless distinct. Hence when I have the conscious desire to raise my right arm, this event in the mental realm is mirrored by a corresponding event in the physical world and my right arm goes up. So the correlation, although real, is purely contingent, and there is no direct causal link between the two types of substance. As a case in point, Locke (1668) held that the 'simple ideas' or conscious presentations that we experience in

apparent response to impingements from the external world, bear no intelligible relation to the 'corpuscular processes' underlying such impingement and bodily response.¹ Instead, the two phenomena are simply stuck together, by God, in a more or less arbitrary manner.

The human body, replete with sense organs, central nervous system, and brain, is a normal subsystem of the physical universe, and as such should be fully explained and governed by the standard laws of nature. These laws only advert to what Locke called 'primary qualities', and in principle the time-evolution of the entire physical universe can be accounted for in terms of such qualities. Physical science in general, including molecular biology and neuro-anatomy in particular, does not invoke any 'secondary qualities', such as the delicate scent of a rose or the deep cobalt hue of a desert sky. Instead, all of the scientifically accessible and mechanistically sufficient properties of my brain consist of primary qualities, and in theory at least, one could obtain an exact physical replica of my brain if one were to exhaustively replicate its objective primary qualities. Hence it seems consistent with all the facts specifiable in terms of physics, molecular biology, and so on, that my brain churns along according to normal electrochemical and anatomical processes and yet is utterly devoid of conscious presentation. Indeed, it doesn't appear to contradict any aspect of fundamental science to hold that only primary qualities exist, which indicates that at our present level of understanding, scientific theory alone cannot answer the question of why this is not a zombie universe, wholly devoid of consciousness.

By the nineteenth century, with the work of Helmholtz and others, significant progress had been made investigating the physiological mechanisms involved in sensation. But the ultimate nature of the relation between these mechanisms

and the associated conscious experience was still no clearer than in Descartes' day. As above, non-interactive dualism asserts that there is no causal connection between mental and physical events. On the generally granted assumption that the universe is a causally closed system, there is no theoretical need to invoke additional factors to predict and explain properly all physical phenomena, including human bodily movements and the underlying neurological activities that initiate and control them. As a proper subset of the physical universe, the upward motion of my right arm can be fully accounted for without appealing to subjective mental factors.

And as with the motions of my limbs, so too with verbal behaviour, including reports on my own conscious experiences. Hence when I state that there is a sharp pain in my toe, this episode of verbal performance can in principle be fully accounted for through appeal to purely objective physical events in my toe and central nervous system, eventually leading to movements in my larynx, tongue, and mouth resulting in the production of various sonic emissions. The subjective, qualitative feeling of the pain itself, the intense secondary quality with which I have direct first person acquaintance, would seem to have no causal role to play. The sufficiency of objective, third person factors led to Huxley's view that conscious experience must be a mere 'epiphenomenon'. Epiphenomenalism acknowledges the seemingly superfluous causal status of conscious experience in the objective, third person scientific account of brain mechanics and physical behaviour. This theme will be briefly revisited in the final section of the paper.

Huxley eloquently depicts the conceptual problem as to the nature of the relation between conscious experience and physical mechanisms in the passage: 'How it is that anything so remarkable as a state of consciousness comes about

as a result of irritating nervous tissue, is just as unaccountable as the appearance of the Djinn when Aladdin rubbed his lamp.'² Following terminology later introduced by David Chalmers,³ the seemingly brute unaccountability that Huxley portrays is now widely known as the 'Hard Problem' of consciousness. As above, the nature of the relation between mind and body induces an entire family of related issues, including the status of mental causation and the place of consciousness in the natural world.

Cartesian versus Sankhya-Yoga Dualism

Cartesian dualism arose within the foregoing context of scientific advancement and discovery, combined with the older Western philosophical and cultural heritage stemming from Judaeo-Christian and Hellenistic sources. Notwithstanding the abundant criticism the text has received over the centuries, René Descartes's *Meditations*, in some sense still provides the most definitive, influential, and well-articulated expression of the presuppositions underlying the modern Western conception of mind. Descartes unhesitatingly identifies the referent of the indexical expression 'I' with *res cogitans*, the thinking substance, and thereby conceives the mind and self as one. For Descartes, thinking substance is of course metaphysically independent of extended substance, which engenders his familiar dualism between mind and matter. Also without hesitation, Descartes takes conscious thought and subjective experience to be unqualified constituents of mental substance, and this particular mode of classification has become so much a part of Western conceptual heritage that the dividing line he draws seems almost self-evident. Surely, if a dualism with matter is to be entertained, then thoughts and subjective presentations belong on the nonmaterial side of the divide?

In contrast to this fairly ubiquitous Cartesian

view, this paper will now explore an alternative version of substance dualism advanced by two allied schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy, namely the Sankhya school, and classical yoga as expounded by Patanjali. These schools draw a metaphysical dividing line not between mind and matter, but rather between matter and pure consciousness, wherein the mind is detached from consciousness and placed on the *material* side of the ontological divide. I think that this alternative metaphysical division constitutes a valuable intellectual perspective for contemporary Western thought, and can cast a new light on the current discussion concerning the relationship between consciousness, mind, and body. Indeed, this Indian metaphysical framework provides a perspective from which to fundamentally re-conceptualise the mind-body problem.

The Sankhya-Yoga View

The Sankhya school is one of the oldest philosophical traditions of India, and many of its ideas are traceable to the Rigveda and the early Upanishads. Sankhya has a great many theoretical points in common with the later yoga *darshana* as expounded in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, and the metaphysical position discussed in the present paper is part of their shared philosophical framework. Thus the basic dualism between consciousness and matter, as well as more specific allied points, will henceforth be referred to, somewhat generically, as the 'Sankhya-yoga view'.⁴

According to the Sankhya-yoga view, the ultimate principle underlying matter is prakriti, the metaphysical substrate supporting all material phenomena.⁵ The mind is deemed to be part of the material world, and hence to be metaphysically grounded in prakriti. The body is also part of the realm of prakriti, and thus mind and body are held to be of the same metaphysical substance. In its most general connotation, the

term 'mind' in Western philosophy corresponds to the combination or complex of three faculties recognised in the Sankhya taxonomy, namely *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahamkara*, whose respective significance will be briefly outlined below.

Manas, which is often translated directly as 'mind', though it is only a single facet of the 'mental triplex', is viewed essentially as an organ, the special organ of cognition, just as the eyes are the special organs of sight. Indeed, *manas* is held to be intimately connected with perception, since the raw data supplied by the senses must be ordered and categorised with respect to a conceptual scheme before various objects can be perceived as members of their respective categories, and as inhabiting a world characterised by the systematic and distinguishable attributes normally perceived. This imposition of conceptual structure on the chaotic field of raw sensation is one of the basal activities of *manas*, and forms the distinction between brute sensation, *nirvikalpaka*, as opposed to differentiated perception, *savikalpaka*.

Hence ordinary perceptual experience is already heavily conditioned by the activities of *manas*, and *manas* is thus sometimes referred to as the sixth organ of sensation.

In addition to its perceptual activities, *manas* is held to be responsible for the cognitive functions of analysis, deliberation, and decision. It is closely allied to *buddhi*, which is somewhat roughly translated as the faculty of 'intellect' or 'reason'. *Buddhi* is a subtler and more powerful faculty than *manas*, and is responsible for the higher level intellectual functions, which require intuition, insight, and reflection. The Indian *buddhi* is in some ways comparable to the Greek *noûs*, while *manas* is responsible for lower level discursive thought and analysis. But *buddhi* is still regarded as a manifestation of prakriti, albeit the subtlest and refined form that material

substance can assume. The combination of *manas* and *buddhi* roughly correspond to what is meant by the objective or 'impersonal' mental faculties in Western philosophical discourse. In addition, Sankhya-yoga recognises a third component of mind, *ahamkara*, which is the ego or phenomenal self. *Ahamkara* appropriates all mental experiences to itself, and thus 'personalises' the objective activities of *manas* and *buddhi* by assuming possession of them. The combination of these three faculties is referred to as *antahkarana*, the 'inner instrument', which approximately comprises the individual mind-self of the Western philosophical tradition.

But on the Sankhya-yoga account, the realm of prakriti or matter is held to be inherently unconscious, and is thereby incapable of producing consciousness as an effect. The manifestations of prakriti are always objects, and it is argued that objects can never transform themselves into subjects. Thus at the heart of this dualistic position is the notion that mind-material is not capable of generating consciousness out of unconscious ingredients. Subjective awareness is seen as a distinct ontological category, and in principle it cannot be derived from the stuff of which objects are made. So, in sharp contrast to the current orthodox western view, Sankhya-yoga philosophy holds that the Hard Problem of consciousness cannot, in principle, be solved within a physicalist framework. And in sharp contrast with Cartesian dualism, the mind and the cognitive activities it sustains are held to be intrinsically unconscious, since *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahamkara* are all manifestations of prakriti.

According to the Sankhya-yoga view, the dynamics of prakriti are governed by the interactions of the three gunas, which are the three basic types of constituent of physical substance. The three gunas are sattva, rajas, and tamas,

which correspond roughly with 'transparency and buoyancy', 'energy and activity', and 'inertia and obstruction'. All physical phenomena are believed to consist of unstable mixtures of these three types of constituents, and the instability of these mixtures is responsible for the evolution and transformations of the material world. Thus the conceptual processes sustained by the mind are governed by the mechanical and unconscious interplay of the gunas, and to this extent, mental phenomena are viewed in purely 'physicalist' or mechanical terms. The unfolding of thought-forms is an integral part of the evolution of prakriti, and mental processes are simply the result of appropriate transformations of unconscious material substance.

Consciousness, on the other hand, is held to belong to a different ontological category altogether. Consciousness is placed in the realm of purusha, the absolute, unconditioned self, which in some respects is comparable to Kant's noumenal self. Purusha is described as pure and undifferentiated awareness, and it is held to be immutable and inactive, to be formless and without parts or limiting characteristics. Purusha is the metaphysical principle underlying the individual person, and closely corresponds to the Atman of the Vedanta school.⁶ Purusha is held to exist in complete independence of the material realm, and so the basic dualism in the Sankhya-yoga metaphysics is between purusha and prakriti, between consciousness and matter. On this account, mind belongs to the world of matter, while the self belongs to the realm of pure awareness, and thus the mind and the self are ontologically distinct. Movement and form are characteristics of matter, and they are also characteristics of thought, which is a manifestation of matter, while consciousness is held to be intrinsically formless and unchanging.

What then is the relationship between consciousness and matter, and how are conscious mental events possible? According to the Sankhya-yoga model, thought processes and mental events are conscious only to the extent that they receive external 'illumination' from purusha. Consciousness is standardly compared to a light, which illuminates the specific material configurations or 'shapes' assumed by the mind. It is the subtle 'thought-material' of the *buddhi* which allows mental events to appear conscious, because the refined *buddhi* substance is transparent to the light of consciousness. Thus conscious thoughts and perceptual experiences take place when *buddhi* receives representational forms, both perceptual and conceptual, from *manas*, the organ of cognition. *Buddhi* is held to consist of a preponderance of the 'transparent' *satva* guna, and thus the representational forms it receives from *manas* are capable of becoming translucent with the light of consciousness. So *buddhi* receives cognitive structures from *manas*, and conscious 'light' from purusha, and in this manner, specific mental structures are capable of being illuminated by an external source, and thereby these structures are able to appear conscious. But consciousness itself is entirely independent of the particular thought structures it happens to illuminate.

Consciousness as such is not directed towards these objects, it has no intention to illuminate the limited material structures in question, and it is completely independent of the mental phenomena upon which its light happens to fall. As such, purusha shares some key properties in common with the pure consciousness or *chit* of Vedantic thought, and in this regard Karl Potter's exposition of the latter is relevant: 'Whereas ordinary awareness not only has an object but also requires it as the occasion for that specific piece of awareness or judgment, pure consciousness

has no more relation to its objects than does the sun that shines on everything without being in the least affected by or dependent on things.'⁷

The translucent quality of *buddhi* distinguishes thought-stuff from the gross material objects of thought and perception, which ordinarily contain a preponderance of the 'dark' or opaque *tamas* guna. Thus only the thought material of *buddhi* is capable of conscious illumination, rather than the entire material realm, since a preponderance of the *tamas* guna renders the external objects of the material realm opaque to the light of consciousness. Hence representational structures, rather than the objects represented, are capable of conscious illumination, which is why minds appear sentient while stones and tables do not. Only the subtle stuff of the mind is a suitable medium for receiving conscious illumination, and thus it is minds which are the loci of awareness in the natural world. But there simply is no *res cogitans*, no conscious thinking substance in Descartes's sense. It is material substance which thinks, and it is the self which makes these thoughts conscious.

Some Advantages of the Sankhya-yoga View

The first point to note in this regard is that the Sankhya-yoga view immediately avoids one of the most serious pitfalls of Cartesian dualism, since on the Indian account, mental causation does not violate physical conservation laws. By including the mind in the realm of matter, mental events are granted causal efficacy, and are therefore able to directly initiate bodily motions, including verbal behaviour. And, conversely, material structures and forces are able to have genuine *mental* effects, as required by normal accounts of, say, the flow of information involved in perceptual awareness of the environment. The representational content of sensory experiences

can now be treated as straightforward consequences of the physical environment's causal impingements upon the sense organs and brain. This is because, in contrast to standard Western dualism, there is no longer a causal or ontological gulf separating mind from matter. Hence two glaring aspects of the mind-body problem which plague Descartes's model are thereby elegantly resolved.

Some further elaboration of the foregoing issue is perhaps in order. On the Cartesian view, subjective presentations or 'ideas', as structured objects, are held to belong to the non-material realm. But, at the same time, they are held to represent external material objects and states of affairs. This leads to an immediate and very serious difficulty, since if the two spheres are metaphysically independent, then it is highly unclear how events in the mental realm could be related to or systematically represent objects in the material realm. Thought becomes separated, by an ontological chasm, from the external objects of thought, and the inner world of subjective experience threatens to become a solipsistic bubble. Hence one of the most serious defects of the Cartesian framework, the reverse aspect of the problem of mental causation, resides in the fact that outside inputs from the environment, such as sound waves and electromagnetic radiation, can have no real effect on *res cogitans*, and the ideas entertained by thinking substance are hence ontologically and causally detached from their corresponding objects in *res extensa*.

On the Sankhya-yoga view, the mind is impacted by various forms of external stimuli, which give rise to internal structures that mirror various key aspects of the external world. These internal structures are instantiated as modifications of the material *manas*, which in turn represent salient aspects of the environment. This picture possesses a significant advantage over

Cartesian dualism, because, since the mind is *material* it can receive physical stimuli from the outside world, and undergo appropriate internal modifications, without invoking troublesome interactions between disparate substances. So, on this model, the representational content of thought is carried in the unconscious physical configurations of the mind, and certain of these patterns or configurations become illuminated by an external and undifferentiated awareness, resulting in the phenomenon of particular conscious thoughts and subjective experiences.

Thus, in contrast to Cartesianism, the Sankhya-yoga framework isolates the problem of consciousness at a more exact and focussed level. It is the conscious, subjective aspect of visual perception which underlies the Hard Problem and serves to motivate the introduction of a distinct metaphysical category, not the causally induced representational structure of perception, since it is theoretically feasible that the latter can be explained in terms of unconscious mechanisms, of generally the same sort that would be applied in the case of robotic 'vision' or even CCTV cameras. The deep philosophical problem in the case of human perception lies not in the explication of representational content or structure, but rather in the fact that this bio-mechanically induced structure is imbued with conscious awareness. Thus Descartes's dualism of mind and matter, wherein conscious presentations qua structured objects are placed in the purely non-material realm, embodies an unhappy conflation of theoretically distinct features, and it thereby creates a causal abyss which insulates perceptual experience from the material objects which are perceived. It is consciousness, rather than content, which provides the most compelling impetus for dualism.

Thus the Sankhya-yoga division is based on a more perspicuous distillation of the salient

components of subjective experience, where the world of qualia, the 'Cartesian theatre' of conscious presentation, is analysed as a mixture rather than as a realm of pure substance. The representational content of qualia is due to the respective material structures or patterns which comprise them, while conscious illumination is external, and ontologically independent of structure. Conscious illumination of structure is made possible by the particular composition of the pattern, wherein the transparent material of thought-stuff enables the light of purusha to enter. Thus representational content is comparable to the geometrical patterns of a stained glass window, which exist independently of their illumination by the sun. The illuminated patterns are a composite, consisting both of structured glass, which is analogous to the thought-shapes assumed by *sattvic buddhi*, and of luminescence, which is the consciousness of purusha. In this manner, qualia are seen as composite phenomena, and, in the case of perceptual experience, there is no ontological gap separating representational objects from the objects represented. Instead, it is the underlying conscious illumination, common to all experience, which defines the metaphysical boundary line between subject and object.

As a closing point in this section it should be observed that the Sankhya-yoga approach yields a much more streamlined metaphysical picture than the Cartesian model. Western non-interactive dualism requires a systematic *correlation* between the physical and mental realms. For example, a given causally efficacious brain state corresponding to, say, my desire to raise my right arm, must exist independently in *res extensa*, and this state is then paralleled in *res cogitans* by the subjective conscious thought that I want to raise my right arm. However, the Sankhya-yoga view induces no such metaphysical duplication. There is the causally efficacious material-mind state of

wanting to raise my right arm, which is illuminated by the undifferentiated light of pure consciousness. Parallel and redundant *immaterial* mental states, mirroring their physical correlates, are no longer needed.

So, in a variety of respects, the ancient Sankhya-yoga version of substance dualism provides a more felicitous dividing line between substances than does the Cartesian parsing of mind and matter. Descartes's picture of consciousness and the mind has had a tremendous influence on the development of Western thought; to a large extent it still defines the terms in which the mind-body problem is conceived, and it colours many contemporary notions of mental content and representation. Thus the alternative Sankhya-yoga view is worthy of serious philosophical attention. A far wider range of cognitive phenomena are made available to naturalistic explanation, simply because the mind is included in the physical world. But, at the same time, the unique and autonomous status of conscious subjectivity is preserved. By conceiving the problem along subtly different lines, the Sankhya-yoga view already solves some of the critical difficulties which would haunt a naturalised version of Descartes's model.

The Hard Problem of Consciousness

In opposition to dualism, physicalism maintains that all mental phenomena, including propositional attitudes such as beliefs and desires, as well as episodes of conscious experience, are ultimately physical in nature. Thus all mental phenomena are held to be either literally identical to physical processes such as brain states, or else directly 'supervene upon' or are 'emergent from' such states. But the Hard Problem of consciousness puts very serious pressure on such a view. As discussed at the outset of the paper, physics' accounts for the universe strictly in terms of objective primary qualities, and hence has no need

of, and seemingly no theoretical space for, subjective first-person experience. Electro-chemical processes in the cerebral cortex, on the one hand, and the qualitative experience of the blueness of the sky, on the other, seem utterly distinct.

This has led some twentieth century philosophers, such as Saul Kripke, to argue that physicalism is false, and that conscious phenomena belong to a separate metaphysical category.⁸ To paraphrase Kripke, Descartes argued that the mind is distinct from the body, since the mind could in principle continue existing without the body. But Kripke quite rightly observes that the argument could go in the other direction just as well: mind and body are distinct because the body could have existed without the, conscious, mind. Thus he considers the possibility of a 'zombie' universe, one that is *physically* identical to ours, replete with materially indistinguishable human bodies and brains, but where there is no conscious experience. As mentioned previously, this possibility is consistent with scientific theory and all available empirical evidence. So, via a sophisticated modal argument based on the principle of necessary identity, Kripke concludes that mind and brain cannot be identical. Instead, à la Locke, a merely contingent correlation happens to obtain in the actual world.

Other philosophers, such as Thomas Nagel⁹ and Joseph Levine,¹⁰ hold that, although the Hard Problem does not directly entail that physicalism is false, it does show that we do not currently have the theoretical resources to understand or explain *how* it could be true—a major advance in our conceptual framework would be required to fully explicate how conscious experience can be subsumed by physical theory. Hence Nagel argues that asserting that 'mind = brain' at the current time is like saying 'mass = energy' to someone in ancient Greece. The ancient Greek wouldn't have the beginning of

a clue as to *how* the statement might be true, because the ancient Greek would lack the theoretical and mathematical resources required to formally interconvert the two. So, although true, 'mass = energy' would just be a brute stipulation. And according to Nagel, we're in the same position right now with respect to physicalism.

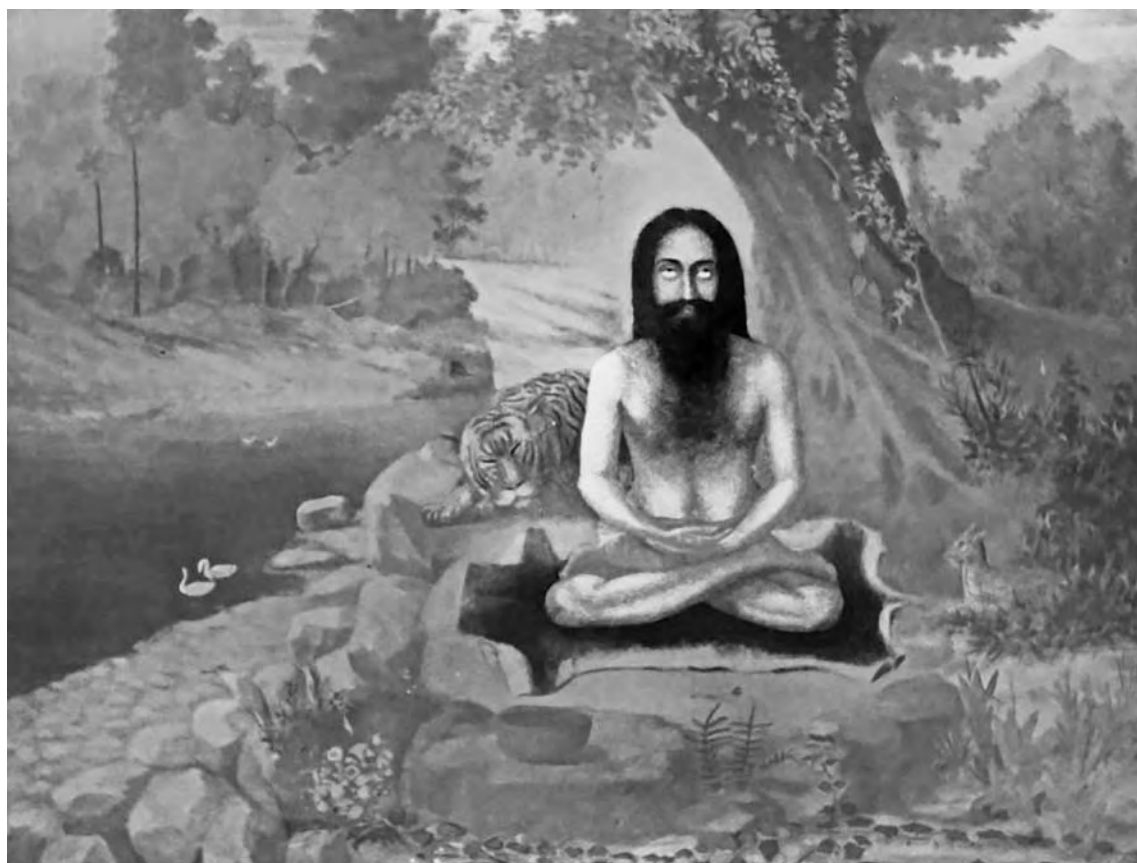
But is the situation not *worse* than Nagel's analogy suggests? 'Mass = energy' is still a normal case of scientific explanation: the terms on either side of the equation both refer to objective physical phenomena. As Nagel himself claims at the start of his paper, such standard cases of scientific understanding and successful reduction seem to shed no light on the relation between mind and brain. Here we are trying to equate something objective, quantitative, and scientifically normal on the one side—brains, with something subjective, qualitative, and empirically quite *abnormal* on the other—first person conscious experience. In this respect, the Hard Problem of consciousness seems historically unparalleled.

Frank Jackson¹¹ is another philosopher who, like Kripke, utilises the Hard Problem to argue that physicalism is not just theoretically intractable, but literally false. According to his celebrated Knowledge Argument, there's more to reality than mere physical information can convey. Accordingly, he contends that physicalism is false because it is incomplete—in principle it cannot explain or account for qualia. Instead, Jackson advocates a version of Huxley's epiphenomenalism—he argues that qualia are metaphysically real, but *causally impotent* with respect to the physical world. He holds that qualia are a non-physical effect of a physical cause, namely, certain brain processes. The brain processes themselves are causally efficacious in the physical realm and are highly conducive to our survival, but qualia are a causally impotent, non-physical

side effect. Qualitative states may seem to cause physical events such as bodily movements, but only because *both* the bodily motion and the conscious experience have a common physical cause; namely an underlying brain process. Thus the experienced sequence of events unfolds *as if* conscious thoughts and desires were playing a role, but this perceived unity between conscious mind and physical body is due, not to a divine harmony between distinct metaphysical realms, but rather to a shared underlying cause.

It is salient to note that, in common with Jackson's dualism, the purely conscious aspect of human experience is also rendered epiphenomenal on the Sankhya-yoga account. The representational content of thought is carried in the unconscious physical configurations of the

mind, and certain of these patterns or configurations become illuminated by the external and undifferentiated awareness of purusha, resulting in particular conscious thoughts and subjective experiences. But consciousness and the illuminated mental processes are entirely independent. Formless and immutable consciousness plays no causal role in the transformation of mental structures, but rather is a passive 'witness' to some small portion of these transformations. The representations and structural transformations that characterise mental contents and processes are part of the normal time-evolution of the physical universe. Some of these happen to be illuminated by an outside, non-physical source of consciousness, which itself does no work and does not alter the physical realm in any way.



In this regard, the Sankhya-yoga view can accommodate many of the claims of physicalism with respect to key aspects of the mind-body problem, such as mental causation and mental representation, and it eliminates the unappealing metaphysical redundancy required by both Cartesian dualism and Jackson's 'floating world' of immaterial qualia. But in response to the Hard Problem, the Sankhya-yoga view adheres to the basic tenet that subjectivity and consciousness cannot arise from unconscious ingredients, and hence physicalism is intrinsically incapable of solving the problem. Instead, the issue is addressed by postulating pure consciousness as a distinct and autonomous substance.

Of course, dualism of any sort is seen by many as an unsatisfactory final solution. In general, monism is a more elegant philosophical stance, which is no doubt one of the intellectual attractions of physicalism. The main rival to physicalism in this respect is some form of monistic idealism, wherein consciousness rather than matter is taken as the fundamental reality. And whereas the Hard Problem constitutes a perhaps fatal impediment for physicalism, there is no analogous reciprocal difficulty for idealism. It is deeply mysterious how conscious experience could possibly arise from objective and unconscious physical components, but it seems relatively unproblematic that the appearance of material reality might stem from consciousness itself. If consciousness is taken as the primary substance, then there isn't a parallel obstacle in explaining the empirical evidence upon which the scientific hypotheses concerning the physical universe are based. Hence some version of consciousness-based monism, such as that advocated by Advaita Vedanta philosophy, may ultimately provide a more compelling resolution to the mind-body problem than physicalism or substance dualism.



Notes and References

1. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).
2. Thomas H Huxley, *The Elements of Physiology and Hygiene: A Text-book for Educational Institutions* (London: Macmillan, 1875), 170.
3. See David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1996).
4. By using the label 'Sankhya-yoga' philosophy, I do not mean to endorse the view that the two schools are essentially the same, nor that yoga is simply an applied or practical component grafted onto Sankhya theory. See, for example, Gerald Larson, 'Yoga and Samkhya: The Important Differences', *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, eds R S Bhattacharya and G J Larson, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, ed. Karl Potter, 28 vols, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 12. Instead, I merely wish to discuss some theoretical points which the two schools have in common, though I have tended to use predominantly Sankhya terminology.
5. In the ensuing discussion, the terms 'prakriti' and 'matter' will be used roughly as synonyms, even though this is not strictly correct, if matter is construed in terms of the 'particles' which make up physical objects. Prakriti is the metaphysical principle which underlies physical manifestations, although for expository convenience, I will often equate the physical world with prakriti.
6. It should be noted, however, that Sankhya-yoga recognises a multiplicity of distinct purushas, that is, one for each self, while Vedantic thought tends to view the Atman as ultimately nondual. Hence on the former account, there is a numerically distinct purusha associated with each material mind-complex.
7. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 3.93.
8. See Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973).
9. See Thomas Nagel, 'What Is It Like To Be A Bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, 83/4 (October 1974), 435–50.
10. See Joseph Levine, 'Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 64/4 (October 1983), 354–61.
11. See Frank Jackson, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32/127 (April 1982), 127–36.

Sixty-Four Yoginis

Dr Suruchi Pande



YOGINIS ARE HOLY WOMEN with yogic powers or female attendants of Shiva or Durga. Commonly it is believed that eight yoginis exist, namely Mangala, Pingala, Dhanya, Bhramari, Bhadraka, Ulka, Siddhi, and Sankata. They are also perceived as divinities constituted by eight groups of letters of the alphabets.

The philosophy of the concept of yogini is based on the concept of Sapta Matrikas, seven Mother goddesses. These seven goddesses symbolise the motherly aspect and have a logical, esoteric, and conceptual sequence. Sometimes the Sapta Matrikas are portrayed in a deeper philosophical conceptual meaning with the eight divinities involved in the creation of universe and its various integral life forms in a serial logical order.

- Brahmi or Brahmani represents the

unmanifested sound, logos, and she creates the universe.

- Vaishnavi gives the universe a definite shape.
- Maheshvari gives individuality to all created beings.
- Kaumari bestows the force of aspirations.
- Varahi is the power of assimilation and enjoyment.
- Aindri or Indrani is the immense power that destroys whatever opposes the cosmic law.
- Chamunda is the power of spiritual awakening.

Sixty-four yoginis symbolise the multiplication of these values. The symbology involves references to sixteen *kalas* or phases that are constituted by the mind, five gross elements, and ten sense organs. The moon has sixteen phases out of which fifteen are visible and one is invisible. There is a group of sixteen eternal goddesses.

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Goddess Gauri doing Penance Standing on a Monitor Lizard

There are sixteen siddhis or attainments or supernatural powers.

Yoginis are representations of powers that are sheltered everywhere in Nature. They are hidden in forest outside and also in mental states—‘*manasa vana*’ of a human being.

A special reference in this article is to the sixty-four yogini temple at Hirapur, Odisha, India, that show us its tantric roots. The circular walls, lack of roof, that is, hypaethral style of a building, arrangement of each yogini image in the niche of the wall to replicate the seat of self, that is, as a symbol of origin of the Self. The circle of sixty-four yoginis symbolises the continuation of life. It is a never-ending circle—a spiritual symbol named ‘*mandala*’. It is also called ‘*yogini chakra*’ as an auspicious ritual circle.

Usually the yogini temples were situated in remote places for tantric rituals. Metaphorically they may suggest that the difficulty in finding out the remotely built temples indicate that the *sadhaka*, a spiritual aspirant, has to accept difficulties and obstacles in aiming for tantric *sadhana*. This desertion in and around the location sometimes gave rise to superstitions and wrong concepts regarding tantric *sadhana*.

Goddess Parvati as the Major Deity in Yogic Sadhana

In Indian mythology Gauri, one of the forms of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is said to have performed a penance while standing on a monitor lizard. She is described as ‘*godhasana bhavet gauri*’.¹ It can be translated as, ‘Parvati is known as Gauri, when she performs penance standing on a monitor lizard, *godha*’. In Sanskrit, monitor lizard is called *godha*. Here the root verb is ‘*gudha*’, which means to wrap up, to envelope, or to conceal.

In the sculptures at Rani Ki Vav, Patan, Gujarat—a unique and intricately carved step well from the Solanki dynasty of the eleventh

century, originally constructed as a memorial to king Bhimdev I by Queen Udayamati—fifteen forms of Parvati are depicted. Among these sculptures there is one image of Parvati in penance standing on a beautifully carved monitor lizard. This form of Parvati or Gauri, who has engaged herself in a penance is known as *panchagni-tapasya* meaning penance in five types of fires. She is depicted as standing in the middle of four fire altars and looking up at the burning sun.

In the sculptures found in South India, monitor lizard is sometimes shown to be the carrier vehicle of goddess Parvati.²

A sculpture of a tiger-faced Matrika, one of the minor goddesses, found at Kaushambi, Allahabad, shows a monitor lizard on her left lap (252).

The Uma-Maheshvara images sometimes show the monitor lizard as the mount of Parvati (306).

Yogini Kshemankari is also depicted in a sculpture from the ninth century as standing on a monitor lizard at the sixty-four yogini temple, Hirapur, Odisha.³

The reason for choosing a reptile like the monitor lizard as a mount for penance is open to interpretation. I feel that it may be due to the solitary nature of this secretive reptile, which is shy and avoids humans. It has a keen eyesight and is said to detect human movement from about 250 meters away. Monitor lizards dwell in various kinds of habitats from open areas to forests. They shelter in burrows or tree hollows. This behaviour also tallies with its apt Sanskrit name *godha*, which refers to the habit of concealing oneself. Since the goddess was engaged in a penance, she preferred a completely solitary undisturbed atmosphere. Hence, according to my interpretation, one can say that the Indian tradition has wisely chosen the monitor lizard as her mount and has not only offered a respectful place to this reptile but has also encouraged its protection and conservation.

Sixty-Four Yoginis:

Important Temples in India

- Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh; ninth century.
- Chandel Dynasty. All shrine cells and statues of goddesses are ruined. Only Brahmani, Maheshvari, and Hingalaja or Mahishasuramardini are remaining.
- Morena, Mitavali, Madhya Pradesh; eleventh century. Belongs to the Kachhapaghata dynasty; built by King Devapala, vassal of the Chandelas.
- Badoh, Gadarmal Matru Mandir, Madhya Pradesh; ninth century.
- Dudhahi, Uttar Pradesh; eleventh century Brahma temple.
- Ranipur-Jharial, Titalagadh, Odisha; ninth or tenth century. Built during the reign of Somavanshi Keshari kings.
- Hirapur, Odisha; ninth century. Built by Queen Hiradevi of Brahma dynasty.

Major Sanskrit Textual Sources of Yoginis

- Puranas: Agni Purana, chapter 52; Markandeya Purana, Kalika Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Matsya Purana, Garuda Purana, Skanda Purana, and Devi Bhagavata Purana.
- *Maya Dipika*, a rare text.
- *Pratishtha Lakshana Sara Samuchchaya*.
- *Chaturvarga Chintamani* of Hemadri; thirteenth century.
- *Matottara Tantra*; thirteenth century.

The Yogini Cult

- Yogini: She is believed to be the origin of the centres of energy in the human body.
- Machhindranatha's Yogini: Also called *kaula marga*, this cult respects women and gives them a right to receive spiritual knowledge.
- Shiva-Shakti synthesis: This philosophy is known as *kaula jnan*.
- Puranic mythology: The Puranic mythology

speaks about the origin of yoginis. Different names of yoginis are found as per the seven different lists and references to their mounts.

- The number of yoginis were believed to be 42, 64, or 81.
- Varahamihira's *Brihat-sambhita*: This work says that the yogini temples should be built on 81 or 64 squares.
- *Adi-Shakti* is connected to 64 forms of art.
- Sixty-four: This number has a unique significance in tantra; *tan*, to spread philosophy.

Characteristic Features of the Names of Yoginis

- Synthesis of tribal beliefs and Vedic as well as Puranic concepts.
- Each Matrika has her own set of yogini attendants. Matrikas are personified forms of powers of gods. They are usually depicted in a group of seven or eight and they are subsidiary deities.
- Some yoginis are indicative of fearsome aspects. They are believed to have magical powers and they have an important place in tantric traditions.
- The worship of Devi Kamakhya has the invocation of sixty-four yoginis in the worship.
- Some yoginis are zoomorphic deities.
- In the concept of yogini, we see the presence of totemism. Totemism is the identification of a tribe with a particular bird or animal. Most totems have their own story where the totem animal or bird has saved the ancestor of that tribe.

Some Rare and Unusual Zoomorphic Forms of Yoginis

- Yogini Uma: Parrot-faced yogini with boar-faced child on her lap and her carrier vehicle is boar.
- Yogini Vainayaki: Elephant-headed yogini with a big mouse as her mount.

- Yogini Shashakanana: Rabbit-faced yogini. She is shown with small rabbits peeping out from each end of her seat.
- Yogini Sarpasya: Snake-faced yogini sitting on an elephant. A large hood of a snake is shown behind her face.
- Yogini Hayanana: Horse-faced yogini resting upon a hyena-like animal. With a fish in her hand she supports a horse-faced child on her knee.
- Yogini Ajanana: Goat-faced yogini resting on a goat.
- Yogini Gomukhi: Cow-faced yogini having a cow as her carrier vehicle.
- Yogini Vrishanana: Buffalo-faced yogini seated on a crane.
- Yogini Rikshanana or Yogini Bhalluka: Bear-faced yogini mounted on a bear.
- Yogini Gajanana: Elephant-faced yogini.
- Yogini Mrigashira: Deer-faced yogini.
- Yogini Simhamukhi: Lion-faced yogini with lion as her carrier vehicle.

Unique Features of Yogini Temple, Hirapur, Odisha

- Built by Queen Hiradevi of Brahma dynasty in ninth century; no information of this dynasty is available. Probably it was the transitional period of Bhaumakar kings who ceased their reign around 900 CE and Somavanshi rulers took it over in 1000 CE.
- Use of sandstone and black chlorite stone.
- Circular, hypaethral, tantric rituals for worshipping *bhumandal* consisting of five *mahabhutas*—fire, water, earth, sky, and ether.
- Yogini sculptures represent the victory of feminine power and they express various emotions.
- Sixty-four yogini cults in tantra developed through transformation of concepts and is shrouded in mystery. They were the powers created to assist goddess Durga in killing the demon Raktavirya.

All yogini images are beautiful and have unique attires, hairstyles, and ornaments.

Sixty-Four Yogini Images at Hirapur Temple with Mounts Depicting Flora and Fauna

- Yoginis and animals: Fourteen mammals; six birds; four aquatic vertebrates like fish, tortoise, frog, and crocodile; and one marine aquatic invertebrate, mollusc; two terrestrial reptiles, snake and lizard; one arachnid, scorpion; and one decapod crustacean, crab.

- Eight zoomorphic forms.
- Yoginis and flora: Mainly lotus, some creeper.
- Yoginis and human beings or corpse.
- Yoginis and various other things, nine in number.

Yoginis and Their Mounts: Symbology

1. Sri Maya or Bahurupa or Chandika: Stands on a corpse lying straight. *Shava* sadhana is a difficult ritual and it signifies detachment from the physical world and uniting with the absolute.

2. Sri Tara: Stands on a corpse; the reason is same as given for Yogini Maya.

3. Sri Narmada: Stands on an elephant. *Narma* means joy and *da* is one who gives; *narmada* is the one who gives joy. Elephant symbolises wisdom. It suggests that the tendency of taking should consist of wisdom.

4. Sri Yamuna: Stands on a tortoise. The word *yamuna* means '*prayuvati gachchhati iti va*; the river which flows by mixing the water of other rivers in her own flow'. And, '*prayuvitam gachchhati iti va*; the river which flows peacefully'.⁴ Probably this is why River Yamuna was also known for its turtles, it was depicted as her vehicle whose speed is slow and peaceful. *Kurma* was related to the stories of creation in the Vedic

literature. In the *Shatapatha Brahmana* text, the Prajapati Brahma was said to have taken the form of a tortoise. He did the 'karma' of creating the world and that is why that particular incarnation came to be known as *kurma*. In the same text, the *kurma* is also called *kashyapa*. The Sanskrit root verb *kash* means to go and to move. Later in the Puranic period, a tortoise was connected to Lord Vishnu.

5. Sri Shanti or Kanti or Lakshmi or Manada: Stands on a full blown lotus. The yogini named after qualities like peace, lustre, wealth, and honour is mounted on a lotus. A lotus represents our journey towards spirituality. From the seed stage, we need to bloom by discovering our path from the dirty waters of worldly life.

6. Sri Vriddhi or Kriya or Varuni: Stands on waves on the pedestal. Varuni is the female counterpart of the deity Varuna, who is the personification of the sky and he is also associated with clouds, rivers, ocean, and water.



Yogini Varahi

So, naturally his female energy is shown to be mounted on waves.

7. Sri Gauri or Kshemankari: Stands on an alligator. Makara is believed to be the symbol of lust and attachment in Indian culture. We move towards higher goals by controlling passions. So yogini Gauri, a fair-one, or Kshemankari, one who is auspicious, rides on an alligator.

8. Sri Aindri or Indrani: Stands on an elephant. Aindri or Indrani is the female energy of the deity Indra. Elephant is associated with water and rains and Indra is the ruler of rains. So his female counterpart is also depicted as mounted on an elephant.

9. Sri Varahi: Boar-faced, she stands on a buffalo. Varahi is described as the *yoga-nidra* of Vishnu and she holds the earth on her tusks. She represents the maternal aspect and is connected to earth. That is why her *vahana*, vehicle or mount is a buffalo.

10. Sri Ranavira or Padmavati: Stands on a snake. A folk goddess, Manasa is popularly worshipped in Bengal. In Hindu mythology, she is the mother of the king of snakes. She is also known by the name 'Padmavati'. Probably this is why Ranavira, one who is a warrior in battles, and Padmavati are associated with snakes.

11. Sri Ushtrarudha or Vanaramukhi: A monkey-faced yogini stands on a camel. Probably this has connection to the Momai Ma or Ushtravahini Devi, who is popular in Gujarati culture. The reason for the depiction of monkey-faced yogini is not clear.

12. Sri Vaishnavi: Garuda is her mount. Since Vaishnavi is the spiritual energy of God Vishnu, she is mounted on an eagle. In Hindu mythology, Garuda is a powerful bird, symbol of the Self inseparable from his master Vishnu.

13. Sri Kalaratri or Panchavarahi: Stands on a boar. This yogini is the energy of Vishnu's Varaha avatar, the boar incarnation. So she is mounted on a boar.

14. Sri Vadyarupa: Stands on a drum. The name of this yogini refers to the *vadya*, musical instrument.

15. Sri Charchika: Stands on a male figure. The Sanskrit root verb *charcha* means to repeat a word. Charchika is our power of japa. And this power of repetition of any divine word should conquer physical attractions.

16. Sri Marjari or Vetali: Stands on a fish. Fish has a unique symbolic meaning in the *panchamakaras*, the five aids in tantra, where twin fishes suggest a reference to the Ida and Pingala *nadis*, which are controlled by pranayama. Probably, it has some connection to goddess Shashthi, who rides a cat.

17. Sri Chinnamastaka: Stands on a severed human head. Chhinnamasta is one of the goddesses of the esoteric tradition of tantra. She symbolises sexual self-control and represents the two aspects of the life-giver and life-taker. She also symbolises self-sacrifice, which is shown by her severed head and that is the reason she is mounted on a severed human head.

18. Sri Vrishabhanana or Vindhyaivasini: Stands on a flat roof or cave with a hole. 'Vindhyaivasini' literally means one who resides in the Vindhya Mountain. She is also called as a bull-faced yogini. She is connected to God Shiva.

19. Sri Jalakamini: Stands on a frog. 'Jalakamini' means one who loves waters and that is why she is shown as standing on a frog. In Maharashtra, a group of seven deities is known as *sati asara*, whose small temples are usually established near rivers or water sources. *Man-duka*, the word for a frog, has a spiritual meaning that is reflected also in the name of *Man-dukyu Upanishad*.

20. Sri Ghatavara: Stands on a lion, lifting an elephant over her head. The meaning of the word 'ghatavara' is not clear. Since this yogini is also a mystical power of goddess Parvati, she stands on a lion.

21. Sri Vikarali or Kakarali: Stands on a dog.

22. Sri Sarasvati: Stands on a serpent. A snake is a symbol of fertility, yogic powers, as well as of immortality and transformation. Sarasvati is the goddess of knowledge. As a human being gets knowledge, one is transformed into a wise and mature human being.

23. Sri Virupa: The pedestal she stands on has lines of waves. The yogini is probably related to the essence of waters.

24. Sri Kaveri: Stands on seven *ratna-kalashas*, gem pots, on a full-blown lotus. *Kalasha*, water pot, and a lotus are symbols of prosperity.

25. Sri Bhalluka: Boar-faced, stands on a *padma-lata*, lotus, on her pedestal. A lotus is a symbol of prosperity.

26. Sri Narasimhi or Simhamukhi: Lion-faced, stands on a pedestal with five flowers and leaves. This yogini is shown with flowers and leaves to show her close association with nature.

27. Sri Viraja: Stands on a lotus bud with leaves. A lotus is a symbol of prosperity.

28. Sri Vikatanana: Protruding lips and curling matted hair, the pedestal with mount is broken.

29. Sri Mahalakshmi: Stands on an open lotus in full bloom. A lotus is a symbol of prosperity.

30. Sri Kaumari: Stands on a peacock. The Kumara Kartikeya is depicted as having a peacock as his vehicle. So his power named as Kaumari is shown as having the same mount.

31. Sri Mahamaya: She is worshipped as the presiding deity of the temple and she is mounted on a full blown lotus. A lotus is a symbol of prosperity.

32. Sri Usha or Rati: Stands on a pedestal with an archer with a bow in his hands, Kandarpa or Cupid. Rati is the female counterpart of the god of love and so, she is shown accompanying Kandarpa.

33. Sri Karkari: Stands on a crab. Karkari is described as a kind of a lute and also a water pot. Perhaps her connection to water associates her with a crab.

34. Sri Sarpasya or Chittala: Snake-faced, the mount is broken.

35. Sri Yasha: The mount is a pedestal with four legs.

36. Sri Aghora or Vaivasvati: Stands on a horned goat-like animal or tapir. A tapir is a large herbivorous mammal and it is similar in shape to a pig. It is found in South as well as Central America and Southeast Asia. This is an unusual animal to be found in a sculpture.

37. Sri Bhadrakali or Rudrakali: Stands on a crow. A crow is usually a symbol of death, magic, and mysteries. Perhaps this is why it is related to the yogini Rudrakali.

38. Sri Matangi or Shitala or Vainayaki or Ganesani or Gajanana: Stands on a donkey.

Yogini Vrishanana





Yogini Kamayani

Goddess Shitala is described as *rasabhastha shitala*, one who rides on a donkey, in the Sanskrit texts on Hindu iconography. Shitala is a folk deity and she is also believed to be a form of goddess Parvati. She rides on a donkey because it has sattva guna, is humble natured in the sense that it is never attached to the things that are kept on its back. It just carries them to the destination unselfishly according to the wish of his owner.

39. Sri Vindhyavalini: Stands on a rat.

Vindhyavalini yogini inhabits the Vindhya mountain range. The mountain gives shelter to innumerable species of flora and fauna. Rodents are also among these species. So this yogini has given place to a rat. A rat is also a symbol of hard work and perseverance because it makes its way and create holes through the hard surfaces of mountains.

40. Sri Abhaya or Vira Kumari: Stands on a scorpion. The definite reason for her mount is not known. But in southern Karnataka, Chelamma is a scorpion goddess.

41. Sri Maheshvari: Stands on a bull. Maheshvari is a spiritual power of Maheshvara, Shiva. So, she is shown as standing on a bull which is the carrier vehicle of Lord Shiva.

42. Sri Kamakshi or Ambika: Stands on a mongoose. A mongoose is a symbol of attributes like protection and defence and it is also the animal symbol of Uttara Ashadha Nakshatra.

43. Sri Kamayani: Stands on a cock. A cock is the symbol of love and progeny. So it is probably correlated to Kamayani.

44. Sri Ghatavari: Stands on a lion. The reason for the mount is not clear.

45. Sri Stuti: Stands on a *bal-di-kathua* or a pot for turmeric paste. The reason for the mount is not very clear but in Hinduism, turmeric is an auspicious element in religious rituals; it symbolises strength due to the medicinal properties in it.

46. Sri Kali: Stands on a recumbent male figure. Here Shiva, the male figure is the symbol of primal awareness. Kali and Shiva are symbols of Prakriti and Purusha.

47. Sri Uma: Stands on pedestal of lotus flowers. A lotus is a symbol of prosperity.

48. Sri Narayani: Stands on a pedestal with a conical pot with a lid. The reason for the mount is not clear.

49. Sri Samudra: Stands on a pedestal with a conch shell. Conch is a symbol of purity and

brilliance and it is also related to Om, which is the first sacred word. It is very natural that the conch is related to the yogini representing the sea.

50. Sri Brahmani: Has three faces, stands on a book. Brahmani is the spiritual power of God Brahma. Brahma is the symbol of knowledge and creation. That is why Brahmani is also depicted with a book.

51. Sri Jvalamukhi: Stands on a platform with eight legs. The reason for the mount is not clear.

52. Sri Agneyi: Stands on a ram with flames of fire in the background. A ram is connected to Agni, the god of fire. It represents ego. We are expected to offer or sacrifice our ego to fire god. Agneyi is the spiritual power of the god of fire and so she is also shown with a ram.

53. Sri Aditi: Stands on a parrot. Parrot is a symbol of intelligence and grasping capacity. In the Vedic literature, Aditi is described as the mother of gods and she is also associated with mystic power of speech, Vak. Maybe that is why a parrot is depicted with yogini Aditi.

54. Sri Chandrakanti: Stands on a cot with four legs. The reason is not clear.

55. Sri Vayuvega: Stands on a female yak. Yak is a short-legged and long-haired ox-like mammal found the Himalayas. It can run fast only short distances. The meaning of the word 'Vayuvega' is 'one who has a speed like wind'. The reason behind the depiction of a yak with this yogini is not much clear.

56. Sri Chamunda: Stands on a musk deer with a lion over her head. The reason for the mount is not clear.

57. Sri Murati: Stands on a muntjac or barking deer. The reason for the mount is not clear.

58. Sri Ganga: Stands on a *makara*, crocodile: In the Indian tradition, *makara* is believed to be the vehicle of River Ganga. The meaning of the Sanskrit word 'ganga' is one who takes towards

God. *Makara* is believed to be the symbol of lust and attachment in Indian culture. When we have controlled the lust for worldly passions, we are led towards higher goals in life. That is why *makara* is said to be a carrier vehicle of Ganga who has control over it.


59. Sri Dhumavati or Tarini: Stands on a goose with a winnower in her hand. Dhumavati is also one of the ten powers named as *dasha maha vidya*. She is a fierce goddess and she reminds us to develop the power of discrimination and to discard what is unreal. The winnower in her hand suggests separating grain, that is the real, from the chaff, that is, the unreal.

60. Sri Gandhari: Stands on a donkey: The reason for the mount is not clear.

61. Sri Sarva Mangala: The niche is empty.

62. Sri Ajita: Stands on a mouse deer or Chevrotain. Usually a deer is a symbol of desires. Yogini Ajita, one who is never conquered by enemies, stands on a mouse deer to suggest to us to develop the quality of controlling our desires.

63. Sri Surya Putri: Stands on a galloping horse. The Sun-god rides a chariot of seven horses. So yogini Surya Putri, that is, the daughter of the Sun is depicted as standing on a galloping horse.

64. Sri Vayu Vina: Stands on a black buck. The black buck is the vehicle of Vayu, that is, the god of wind. So probably yogini Vayu Vina is depicted with a blackbuck. 

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2. See *Bharatiya Murtishastra*, 196.
3. See Dr Suruchi Pande and Dr Satish Pande, *Fauna and Deities: A Perspective on Nature Conservation* (Pune: Ela Foundation and Directorate of Social Forestry, 2016), 279.
4. See *Bharatiya Murtishastra*.

Maharishi Patanjali's Ishvara

M A Narasimhan and M A Jayashree



WHEN WE STUDY deeply Patanjali's yoga *darshana*, philosophy, it is obvious that Patanjali takes the human mind as the basic foundation to resolve human conflicts and catalyse their evolution by methodologies that are predominantly mental. It can be termed as psychology that spans both the *para*, spiritual, and the *apara*, empirical, worlds. Maybe, we can call it spiritual psychology.

He builds his *kriya*-yoga, yoga in practice, on three components namely, *tapah*, *svadhyaya*, and *ishvara-pranidhana*.

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All the three components we see, deal with the maturation of the three domains of our systems, namely the body and the senses, the intellectual system, and the emotional system.

They are enunciated by him in the first sutra of the second chapter, *sadhana-pada*: '*Tapah-svadhyaya-ishvara-pranidhanani kriya-yogah*.'¹

While explaining the meaning of each, first, he speaks of *tapah* as the purification of the neurophysiology. Second, *svadhyaya* leads to the purification of the intellect leading to the realisation of the inner core of the Atman and its inclination. Third, *ishvara-pranidhana* leads to the attainment of *samadhi* through the culturing of the emotional domain.

The whole concept is an inner journey of

the self or purusha into deeper and finer layers of one's composition. Now, the question taken up here is about the concept of *ishvara* and the relationship between Atman or purusha and *ishvara*, and their roles in the art of attaining the state of samadhi.

The sutra, '*ishvara-pranidhanad va*' (1.23) has invariably been translated by most of the traditional as well as modern authors as a choice in the practice of yoga. Because the statement, '*ishvara-pranidhanat va*' has been interpreted as meaning that surrendering to *ishvara* can be a matter of choice. But this statement has to be interpreted as, it is not a choice, it is the only way, since the meaning of *va* could also be 'only'.

If we were to take this statement to mean that, this is an essential ingredient of practice in the yogic path of a sadhaka, the whole scenario of Patanjali's yoga changes. It makes for a more cogent and cohesive picture of the ashtanga yoga practice.

Most probably the reason for scholars choosing the meaning to be 'a choice', could be that most of the traditional commentators are the followers of the path of jnana. It seems they have tried to present their commentaries in the same format as that of the famous commentaries on *Brahma Sutra*, where the emphasis is generally on the word structure and grammatical interpretation. In such commentaries, logic takes a prominent part. The bhaktas seem to have never bothered about writing a scholarly commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*.

On the other hand, there are commentaries by the practitioners of yoga that seem to have less of logic and more of a narration of their experiences, making them not serious texts to be studied by the academician. Most of the present-day authors also seem to be academicians and not really practitioners of yoga and hence the emotional aspect has been given a secondary

position. So the concept of *ishvara-pranidhana* takes a back seat.

If we were to take the sutra, '*ishvara-pranidhanad-va*' in the context of the other sutras that are explicitly associated with *ishvara*, like the sutra, '*samadhi siddhih ishvara-pranidhanat*' (2.45), it becomes clear that *ishvara-pranidhana* is not a choice but an essential ingredient in the process of attaining the state of samadhi by the sadhaka. If so, then we have to know who this *ishvara* is and its relation to and its role in the evolution of the sadhaka.

Who is This Ishvara of Patanjali?

The sutras that are descriptive of *ishvara* are: 1. '*Klesha-karma-vipaka-ashayaibh-aparamrish-tah-purusha-vishesha-ishvarah*' (1.24). 2. '*Tatra niratishayam sarvajna bijam*' (1.25). 3. '*Tasya vachakah pranavah*' (1.27).

The sutra 1.24 defines *ishvara* as mentioned above. *Ishvara* is purusha-*vishesha* meaning that *ishvara* is a different entity from Atman or purusha. But *ishvara* too is a purusha. But *ishvara*'s uniqueness is that unlike the ordinary purusha, *ishvara* is beyond the influence of the *klesha-karma* and *vipaka*. That is, the ordinary purusha, self, or Atman is caught up in the whirlpool of suffering and desire and the consequent actions of which results in a concoction of *chitta-vrittis*, which enslaves it, whereas *ishvara* is untouched by this amalgam of experience and consequent action.

Thus, *ishvara*, who is self-sufficient is neither interested in responding to the inputs and nor react, *ishvara* initiates no action for *ishvara* has no needs unlike the purusha, who has to satisfy the needs that arise in it. That is why it is called as purusha-*vishesha*, a special kind of purusha.

This statement that *ishvara* is a special kind of purusha leads us to the question of where *ishvara* is located in the creation of things. The Indian

system of thought, particularly the Upanishads, say: '*So'kamayata bahusyam prajayeya*; he willed to become many'.² *Ishvara* willed to become many and it continues saying, '*Tad-shrishstva tad-anupravishat*; after creating the world, *ishvara* entered into it'.³ Further it also states, *ishvara* made the human heart as the abode among the human beings. See Bhagavadgita: 'O Arjuna, the *ishvara* resides in the heart of all living beings'.⁴

This statement is further elucidated in most of the Upanishads. To take for example the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, which starts with the words, '*Ishavasyam-idam sarvam*; the creation is permeated by *ishvara*',⁵ inside and outside and that there is nothing in which *ishvara* is not present. This concept is uniquely Indian. So, the doubt that plagues Western theism about the active relationship and communication with God and God's creation disappears in the Indian system. So to identify this God, who is dwelling inside us, we name God as the supreme Soul.

Despite being an indweller, *ishvara* is unmoved by all the chaos to which the Atman or *jivatma* or purusha is subjected to. It is the Atman's own making of being swayed by all the chaos created by its own fascination and serious involvement with the external transient sensory world.

Again the Upanishadic statement starting with the words '*dva suparna*' of *Mandukya Upanishad* speaks graphically of two birds residing in the same tree but one without involving in any activity of pursuing any pleasure like eating, sits quietly, happily, while the other involves itself in eating, and the like, and getting withered away.⁶ It is a symbolic representation, where the tree is the human physical body, *sharira*, in which reside two birds, one in the state of equanimity, *paramatma*, and the other searching for happiness in activity, Atman or purusha.

The Shruti texts are many, some expressing non-difference between the Atman and the *paramatma*, and some saying that they are separate entities, different schools of philosophy lay emphasis on one or the other of such aspects and try to explain the texts.

But the task of Patanjali is that of giving practical advice on how to attain the state of equanimity, and so he borrows ideas from the ancient texts that are convenient and practicable in the efforts of the sadhaka to attain the state of samadhi.

The attempt to reconcile the relationship between the *ishvara* and the purusha or Atman in a practical way comes from the Ramanujacharya school of thought. Here it is conceived that the purusha is the indweller of the physical body known as the *pura* or the abode of the Atman. That is why he is called as the purusha. But in this school of thought, the purusha is considered as the body of *ishvara*. Thus *ishvara* also becomes a purusha but a special one. Hence *ishvara* is termed as *paramatma* or *antaryamin*. He is the unmoved mover and interferes only in the affairs of the purusha when the purusha desires it. That is because the purusha or Atman has been given the freedom of choice to involve in the world and experience its consequences, or turn inwards and get the grace of *ishvara* to gain eternal bliss.

Sri Krishna says that the Atman has the freedom of, doing, karma, or not doing, *akarma*, or doing differently, *vikarma*. This freedom of choice given to the purusha is never transgressed by *ishvara*, who waits patiently until the purusha is fed up with the interaction with the chaotic world and turns to *ishvara* for permanent solace. That is why in the Gita, after speaking of all possibilities of action, *ishvara*, at the end leaves the choice of choosing the path to Arjuna by saying '*yathechchhasi tatha kuru*; do as you please'.⁷ Thus *ishvara* leaves the final decision to Arjuna himself.

The Upanishadic texts speak of the *panchakosha*, where two *koshas* are common to all creations. They are the *annamaya kosha*, the gross body and the senses, and the other, *anandamaya kosha*, the subtlest body which is the domain of unadulterated bliss which is also, *ishvara* himself. So we can accept the concept that *ishvara* as the innermost core of our being, as *antaryamin*.

It also supports the logical contention of Patanjali about the travel of *chitta* from grosser to the finer level and the final goal being to attain the state of ananda. Thus, the idea of Patanjali's yoga is to wean away ones *chitta* from all the layers of distraction, if one has to pursue one's goal of attaining the state of samadhi.

But the vital element to move in this process of evolution is the ego. Ego alone determines our persistence in either to involve in the worldly way or to engage oneself in the spiritual path. This ego or *asmita* in the ultimate sense is the stubbornness of the purusha to think of oneself as a separate special entity. This becomes the greatest obstacle at the ultimate aim of attaining of *ishvara* getting hindered, if ego does not permit itself to surrender to *ishvara*. Thus at the final stage *ishvara-pranidhana* becomes crucial. That is why Patanjali says: '*Samadhi siddhih ishvarapranidhanat*; you attain samadhi and siddhi by surrendering to *ishvara*.'⁸

One might ask how this *ishvara* can be bliss incarnate? It is because *ishvara* is self-sufficient. Hence, *ishvara* neither seeks something nor expects something from the activities of *ishvara*'s creation. *Ishvara* is '*Tatra niratishayam sarvajna bijam*; *Ishvara* is unmatched and is the source of all knowledge' (1.25). For *ishvara* is the embodiment of all knowledge of all times, and is self-sufficient and fulfilled, that is why *ishvara* is called the unmoved mover whereas the *jivatma* is the one who oscillates between *ishvara* and the sensory world.

One may ask why Patanjali characterises *ishvara* with *sarvajnatva*, the all-knowing capability. For Patanjali, the fall or the binding of the Atman is basically due to one's ignorance or *avidya*. The whole ashtanga process advocated by Patanjali is to help the purusha to shed this *avidya* or ignorance by stages to reach the all-knowing stage that is the state of *ishvara*.

Now, one may wonder why a perfect *ishvara* should get in touch with the imperfect world that *ishvara* has created and has laid down the laws to be followed, so that the purusha or Atman can attain by one's own effort the higher states of consciousness.

It is because of *ishvara*'s *karunya* or compassion towards one's own creation. We get many examples for this in our ancient lore. Due to *avidya* compounded by wrong choices, when the Atman or purusha becomes bewildered and wants somebody to guide or even advice on how to get out of the mess that one has made out of one's life, *ishvara*, the compassion-incarnate, appears as a guru to lead the troubled souls to happiness by giving the advice of acquiring proper knowledge.

It reminds us of the famous verses from the Bhagavadgita: 'O scion of the Bharata dynasty, whenever there is a decline in virtue and increase of vice, then do I manifest myself. For the protection of the pious, the destruction of the evil-doers, and establishing virtue, I manifest myself in every age.'⁹ And, Sri Krishna also says that he has no duties or obligations in this world but appears in this world to lead it out of its self-inflicted misery, again and again by following the right path (3.22-3).

Is it not what Patanjali means by the statement, '*Sa esha purvesham api guruh kalena anavachchhedat*; *ishvara* is each and every one, and is even the teacher of the first ones; and is unaffected by time' (1.26). Ramanujacharya,

in his commentary on the Gita, says while commenting on verse 4.8, that the words '*tadatmanam srijamyaham*' not only mean *ishvara*'s own incarnation, which is the rarest of the rare event, but also includes leaders, prophets, and saints, as a replica of *ishvara*, to lead the world out of misery, be it oppression, poverty, despair, and the like.

If that meaning were to be taken, any leader, who genuinely helps in reducing the misery of an individual or a group of people or society in general, from whatever forms of misery they are in at that moment of time, is *ishvara*. It could happen in any culture, any nationality, or in any tongue that is understandable by the masses. And this is a continuous, unbroken chain of masters coming to enthuse and lead the flock from whatever type of misery that they are acutely experiencing at that point of time, *kalena anavachchhedat*, undeterred by time.

One should also note that these gurus, only by their example or by their advice, tell the masses how they can get rid of the misery that they are suffering and how the origin of all those miseries are due to their own *avidya*. No incarnation has ever been known to use magic to transform society into a better one. It has always been the individual and collective efforts of society in getting rid of their misery. So, we find the appearance of a guru is only as an adviser and also their words were meant to act as a catalyst in moving the despairing individuals and masses in the path of evolution. That is the only job or duty that *ishvara* has assigned oneself as far as *ishvara*'s interaction with creation is concerned.

But one may ask: 'How am I to know *ishvara* or how am I to address *ishvara*?' Patanjali says, '*Tasya vachakah pranavah; ishvara* is designated by the sound or vibration indicated by the word *pranava*'.¹⁰ In the Indian context,

pranava is the primordial sound or vibration out of which this creation emanated. So, *pranava* is the wave-form of *ishvara*. It means that in terms of sound, the primordial sound is Om or *Aum*.

In the Indian tradition, there is no distinction between sound and form, for a sound will always have a form in one's psyche, and any particular form will have its associated sound form. So in order to motivate *ishvara*, to come to our rescue, in order to take us out of our *avidya*, the means is '*tajjapah tadarthabbhavanam*' (1.28). It is to repeat the sound along with feeling towards the meaning of the sound. Please note that for the practice to be effective, all the three should be there: the physical effort, the intellectual understanding, and also the emotional affiliation to the object of the sound.

What is *pranidhana*? It is obvious from the sutra, '*Samadhi siddhieh ishvara-pranidhanat*', that Patanjali uses this sutra to show, a far deeper meaning than that of the superficial effort of the ordinary religious person to resign oneself to the will of God. But such an attitude, the forced submission to God's authority will not help much in the path of culturing the mind. For if bitter experiences become the order of the day, such sheer mental attitude of submission goes under a heavy strain, the consequences of which are more disastrous than making the individual strong enough to confront any adversity in one's life. The very fact that this surrendering to *ishvara* must lead to the attainment of samadhi, shows it as a deeper process of yoga practice to help in the transformation of the sadhaka. It cannot be just passive acceptance of the consequences of whatever experiences one faces in the course of one's life.

So what could be this *ishvara-pranidhana*?

We know that the whole journey of yoga practice is to get rid of the *kleshas* that the

human mind is plagued with, so that one can get into a state of uninterrupted bliss. It is very clear that all these *kleshas* are primarily the product of *avidya* or ignorance. How this purusha, who is the embodiment of perfection, gets into this quagmire of *kleshas*? It is due to the presence of *asmita*, ego, the final veil that prevents us from reaching the final level of perfection and makes us to be caught in the whirlpool of *chitta vrittis* termed as bondage, for when once the purusha is caught in the state of *asmita*, one is bound by the attractions and the challenges that is posed by prakriti, leading to the experience of *kleshas*.

All systems of yoga express this idea of how to get out of the clutches of *asmita* and make it a willing slave in our journey to the state of samadhi or the goal of self-realisation, where *avidya*, the misplaced knowledge in the brain is made to disappear. It is a steady effort to bring in a gradual and steady way from the level of individuality, which is the seat of the I-consciousness to the consciousness of the Supreme; maybe we can also call it as the travel of the *chitta* from the finite to the infinite.

The rishis of yore are emphatic that this journey can also be called as pathless path, because it takes many forms depending upon the temperament and the samskaras of the sadhaka. That is why Patanjali tells in another sutra: '*Svadyayad-ishtha-devata-samprayogah; self-study and reflection on yourself brings you into contact with the desired ideal*' (2.44).

It means, in generic terms, that one, by realising one's own inherent dispositions and the strengths and weaknesses in oneself comes upon the manifestation of the *ishtha-devata*, the supreme reality appearing in a form according to one's liking and imagination about *ishvara*. This makes the sadhaka's path easier and one can determine or choose the path that one has to

follow to reach the state of samadhi with the help of the conception of one's *ishtha-devata*.

One should also understand that *pranidhana* is not just making one's will subservient to the Divine will, it is the growing admiration and veneration towards *ishvara* as the sadhaka realises the greatness as well as the compassion of *ishvara* in taking one to eternal bliss. If one were to name the state of equanimity of mind which is attained by getting rid of the pulls of the worldly worries as *atma-rati*, this total absorption in *ishvara*'s greatness by the sadhaka, out of sheer admiration becomes *paramatma-rati* that is liberation or moksha.

Thus we find that Patanjali's *ishvara* plays a significant role in honing to perfection the sadhaka's psyche to reach the state of infinite bliss. This aspect is all the more important and crucial in the path of evolution of a sadhaka, as we have large numbers of sadhakas who have practised diligently the first two aspects namely, *tapah* and *svadhyaya*, and gained paranormal powers. But without *ishvara-pranidhana*, they are deprived of culturing *asmita*, making them a menace to society. In the days of yore, such persons were called rakshasas, who were selfishness incarnate. So, we find this third aspect of sadhana, *ishvara-pranidhana*, to be as crucial as the other two practices that Maharishi Patanjali envisages.



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5. *Ishavasya Upanishad*, 1.
6. *Mandukya Upanishad*, 3.1.1.
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YOUNG EYES

Getting High



EVERYONE WANTS to get high, to get lost in the frenzy of the fuzzy world, away from disturbing ruminations about the day-to-day struggles of existence. It is an attempt to get beyond suffering by numbing one's perception of it. Some want to get high because they think that by doing so, they can have an accentuated experience of their senses. What they hear, touch, see, smell, or taste leads to a thousand-fold of the experience they would have without getting high. All this happens when the person is freed from the pains and the wants of the body. It is as if the person is taken to a completely another world and from there is able to confront one's inner feelings and repressed emotions.

There are many ways that people get high. The most common way is to consume some substance that produces an altered state of consciousness or gives a 'kick' to one's body and mind like consuming alcohol, smoking

cigarettes, taking drugs, and the like. However, some do not resort to such means and get the feeling of high just by a rush of adrenaline in their bodies. They accomplish this by engaging in adventure sports like rafting, bungee jumping, and the like, or even by playing some computer games, silly as it may sound!

While in their 'high', many people can do what they would not have even thought of doing while their normal selves. By getting high, many people are also able to fulfil their long-wanted desires. Many have associated getting high with the phenomenon of creativity. It is common to hear that a puff of smoke or a sip of liquor helps in the spurt of creativity in a person. And that is why most creative spaces are clouded with smoke or dizzied with the stench of alcohol! However, there is little or no evidence to suggest that getting high leads to better creativity or imagination. This is nothing but a psychological

prop used to give oneself a feeling that somehow that person is different and this 'difference' has to be cherished by indulging oneself with some substance. When there are periods of lack of imagination or an absence of creative output, people fill these periods with intense substance abuse and 'getting high'. It is quite similar to people filling their silent parts of a speech with 'umms' and 'ahhs'. The speech would have been better without these meaningless filling in of space. Similarly, one can be quite creative without having to fill one's silent phases with any kind of substance abuse.

Getting high is actually an attempt to get rid of the problems of one's life, for a limited time, only to return to the realities of the world, with a weakened body and mind. All attempts at getting high are in fact, attempts to deliberately waste time. Instead of trying to get high by dependence on substances, one can get high or the sense of being high by doing many other things. For instance, one can help someone in distress, if not by anything else, by simply listening to that

person. One could help someone by providing food, clothing, or shelter, or even by sharing one's knowledge with someone in ways that would increase the quality of life of the other person. The other method of getting euphoric is to list down things one could accomplish, provided that person invested the required amount of time, energy, intellect, and also money. For instance, it would be quite possible for almost everyone to become the head of the country they belong to, if they gave the necessary time, effort, and money. Once, such a list of things is written down, one can try to achieve those things one by one, in the order of the degree of difficulty.

Probably the best method of getting high or getting a sense of high is by having an achievable ideal that is not too ordinary and yet not too high. By devoting oneself to the achievement of such an ideal, one's actions would be automatically determined by whether it would enable one to get close to the ideal or not. And that would ensure that the 'high' is continued for long!




IMAGE: [HTTPS://MYSEENDOFF.COM](https://myseendoff.com)

BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Darshana

THE WORD *darshana* is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word *darshana* is seeing. In many Indian languages, it also means seeing a holy person or the image of a deity. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this word. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *darshana* is derived from the root word *drish*, which means seeing, viewing, looking at, knowing, discerning, sight, view, look, appearance, the eye, theory, doctrine, the aspect of a planet or the observed spot. The word *darshana* means the eye, dream, intellect, dharma, attainment, mirror, scripture, six philosophies, colour, direct perception, sight, the sight of a holy person, the sight of God, the sight of the image of a deity, a vision, a glance, regarding, analysis, rejection, intuition, contemplation, looking after, caring for, viewing, cancelling, flushing, purging, casting out, removal, contradiction, scattering, denying, extermination, spitting out, destruction, refusal, banishment, expelling, driving away, negative reply, negative response, override, rebuff, refusal, putting to shame, who or what puts to shame, obscuring, rival, offer, repudiation, reproach to, command, order, deterrent, knowledge, prevention, warning, eclipsing, Vedic sacrifice, showing, aspect, appearance, insulting, directing, virtue, moral

merit, religious knowledge, understanding, visiting any sacred shrine, worshipping in the presence of any image, demonstrating, teaching, foreseeing, inspection, examination, displaying, exhibition, becoming visible, visiting, going into the presence of, audience, semblance, producing in court, judgement, apprehension, opinion, mention, assertion, experience, and intention.

The word *darshana*, as used in Indian philosophical traditions, means much more than philosophy in the usual sense of the word. It involves 'seeing' or 'experience'. In this sense, the six Vedic and the three non-Vedic philosophies in the Indian tradition were not born by mere armchair thinking or analysing, but are the results of quite palpable experiences, empirical and intuitive. The word *darshana* also means the process of analysis, where a deeper level of seeing is involved. Because of the fundamental difference of always including subjective experiences in the process of the formation of a system of thought, Indian philosophy cannot be straightaway compared with its Western counterpart. However, one cannot set aside these Indian philosophical systems as no philosophy at all, and one should not group them under 'theology'. That is mainly because, though these philosophical traditions were based on experience, some of them did not preach theism or the worship of a godhead. The non-Vedic philosophical systems do not need even the support of the Vedas. The Vedic philosophical schools are Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

PB

TRADITIONAL TALES

Self-created Bondage

THERE LIVED IN A VILLAGE a compassionate confectioner, devoted to God. His shop was the biggest and the cleanest in the village. He used to feed and take care of all the sadhus who visited him. Once, while he was sitting in his shop while the sun was scorching, a sadhu, exhausted from walking in the sun, came and stood before the shop. He stood in the shadow there for some time and gathered his breath. Then, the confectioner requested the sadhu: 'Sir, please tell me if you need any kind of help. I will do it.' The sadhu replied: 'Son, this garment of mine is torn in many places and so, I could not sleep the whole night yesterday because of the menace of mosquitoes. If you mend this garment, it would be of great help to me.' The confectioner considered the service to sadhus as the very aim of his life. Hence, he immediately mended the garment and gave it to the sadhu. He was overjoyed that God had given him an opportunity to serve a sadhu. That night, the sadhu had a good and peaceful sleep.

The next day, the sadhu went to the confectioner's shop. He thanked the confectioner and said: 'Son, because you helped me, yesterday night I escaped the nuisance of the mosquitoes and I could sleep peacefully. I want to do something for you in return. I am in no position to gift you riches because I have long renounced them. However, I can send you to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu, by the power of my spiritual austerities. I can take you to Vaikuntha, for reaching where *jnanis*, sages, bhaktas, and many others perform spiritual austerities for numerous years. By reaching Vaikuntha, you can

attain mukti, which is beyond life and death.'

The confectioner replied: 'Sir, you are giving me this rare fortune because of your pure love for me. But what can I do? Though you are giving me the rare gift that is not attained by many sages and spiritual aspirants, I am not in a position to accept it. I have two young sons. If you come after eight years, and take me to Vaikuntha, I would be able to come. Then, my sons would have grown up into adults and would be in a position to take care of themselves. I am grateful for your love and compassion.'

Time rolled on. The eight years mentioned by the confectioner passed. The sadhu again went to the confectioner's shop and told the confectioner: 'Son, I have come to express my gratitude. You had earlier told that you would come with me after eight years. Eight years were completed yesterday. I have come here to give you mukti.' Hearing these words of the sadhu, the confectioner said: 'Sir, what can I tell about the compassion you have for me? I am sorry that I cannot act as you wish. My sons have become very bad persons now. They have become drunkards and spendthrifts. Hence, now I have to look after them and their wealth. That is why I am unable to act according to the wishes of your compassionate heart. So, if you can kindly come after another eight years, I would be ready to immediately come with you.'

The sadhu only felt pity for the confectioner. He thought to himself: 'He is a good person, but he has more attachment to his sons than devotion to God. He has strongly bound himself in the bondage of the love for his

sons. How can I take him to the selfless God?' Nonetheless, the sadhu told the confectioner: 'I would come again after eight years, just as you say.' Saying this, the sadhu left. The next eight years mentioned by the confectioner also passed. The sadhu came to the village again to keep his promise. However, he could not see either the shop or the house of the confectioner. He saw a dilapidated building in that place, much like a rest-house. There, the confectioner's elder son was doing a poor business, in a small shop. The sadhu approached the elder son and asked him about the confectioner, telling him about the agreement between him and the confectioner. The confectioner's elder son said: 'Sir, our father passed away, leaving us in dire straits. It is because of him that we are so poor now. I am somehow managing this shop. My brother does farming, himself doing the ploughing, in the field that you can see there.'

The sadhu quietly listened to everything.

Then, by the power of his spiritual austerities, he saw what had happened. By his intuitive vision, the sadhu understood that after death, due to his attachment to his sons, the confectioner was reborn as the bull used for the ploughing of his family's field. The sadhu also understood that the bull was helping his younger son in farming. The sadhu started waiting for the younger son to untie the bull for grazing. The younger son untied the bull when he went for his lunch. The sadhu went to the bull and sprinkled on it the holy water that he had and by the power of his spiritual austerities brought back the bull's memories of its previous birth. Then, the sadhu asked the bull, which was the confectioner in its previous birth: 'Son, as promised earlier, I have come to express my gratitude. Yesterday, the eight years you mentioned were completed. I have come here to give you mukti. What, are you ready to come with me?'

(To be continued)



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Laruelle: A Stranger Thought

Anthony Paul Smith

Polity Press, 65 Bridge Street,
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK. Website:
www.politybooks.com. 2016. \$24.95.
xii + 224 pp. PB. ISBN 9780745671239.

François Laruelle is a radical thinker, to say the least. He started the non-philosophy project several decades ago and developed it in five stages. Now, he prefers to call it non-standard philosophy. Laruelle's thought and the treatment meted out to it by the academia brings to light the fact that even philosophy, which is supposed to be the voice of the marginalised, can create a new marginalisation. Serious engagement with Laruelle's thought is less, though the situation is becoming better, because he attempts to question the very roots of philosophy. However, Laruelle does not claim to destroy philosophy itself, but he ventures to rethink and restructure how philosophy is done.

This book is divided two parts. The first part gives a generic introduction to Laruelle's thought and the second part focusses on his treatment of politics, science, ethics, fiction, and religion. The author, Anthony Paul Smith, starts the book with a note on the urgent cry for finding the end to philosophy. He informs us that philosophy is undergoing an identity crisis, which is not a new phenomenon in philosophy. Smith says that according to Laruelle, the right question to ask is not whether philosophy has ended, not "Are we done with philosophy", but "What is to be done with philosophy?" This book explores the answer to this question that Laruelle provides in his non-philosophy. The point of non-philosophy is not a different philosophical analysis of the traditional materials philosophy has tended to dominate, but a mutation or recording of the machinery of philosophy itself in order to create a new practice of thought. Non-Philosophy is not simply a "new philosophy" (2).

Smith elaborates that non-philosophy does not add yet another voice to interminable debates, but at its best aims for something different, something strange and alien to standard philosophy. Non-Philosophy is stranger than philosophy. And this hitherto untold strangeness lies behind the two-fold purpose of this book. The first part of the book provides a generic introduction to non-philosophy, tracing its most general structures. ...

Part II is organized into five chapters to evoke the five waves of non-philosophy. These waves are Laruelle's own division of his work into five distinct periods that remain largely consistent over time, but with new materials and focus in each period. However, I do not present here a simple history of non-philosophy, as I have elsewhere presented such a history by focusing on either the change in axioms that guide each wave or the history of the conjugation of science and philosophy. Instead I have picked five significant thematics running throughout each of the five waves and show how these thematics are engaged with from his early work to his most contemporary, and in turn how they help to develop the practice of non-philosophy (2–3).

Smith also addresses Ray Brassier's criticism of non-philosophy, who feels that 'non-philosophy has not delivered on any of its perceived promises' (4). Smith clarifies:

Laruelle does not want to provide us with another philosophical analysis. Instead he wants to use the different philosophical analyses to do something with philosophy, without making any claim about the Real that conditions every theoretical project. To show how Laruelle does this, I engage with his corpus generically (or synthetically in the standard philosophical idiom) rather than linearly. This means that I do not present a developmental reading of non-philosophy. Laruelle himself says that such a reading

of non-philosophy as a linear evolution would be artificial. ...

This also means that I really do aim here at a general introduction to non-philosophy. While at times I mark certain differences in my understanding of non-philosophy from others who have engaged with Laruelle's large body of work, this is not a book aiming to mark out a certain space or assuming major familiarity with the specific debates amongst Francophone and Anglophone non-philosophers. Instead, I firstly hope to help new readers of Laruelle to gain a foothold in his own texts, rather than this text alone, by explicating some of the main concepts and questions that non-philosophy engages with. I then turn to helping new readers situate non-philosophy in relation to some other debates in various areas of philosophy and theory more generally, through creative readings of those concepts and questions alongside other forms of thought that I take to be radical. The radical nature of these other discourses is assessed on the basis of their incisiveness and rigor in their understanding of the world as well as their strangeness according to the norms of the standard model of philosophy and various forms of theory produced by that model (4–5).

Confident about the non-philosophy project, Smith explains that from his 'limited perspective, analytic philosophy appears to still be conditioned largely by a hegemonic Liberal political project and is in many ways moribund as it works out increasingly self-referential and self-limiting problems. At the same time, Continental philosophy has largely continued to focus on explicating its own history or moving toward new forms of metaphysics' (7). About the possibilities of non-philosophy, Smith says:

Non-Philosophy provides resources for carrying out radically creative work that can take traditional tropes in standard philosophical discourse and combine them with exciting forms of thought taking place without regard for that tradition. In being stranger than philosophy, it allows one steeped in the history of philosophy to radically refuse the borders of philosophy and other forms of human knowledge. More importantly, it breaks down the frame imposed by that history of

philosophy when considering questions of identity, universality, ethics, knowledge, science, faith, art, and other traditional themes of philosophy. ...

The two-fold purpose of this book really flows from one underlying drive: to show what can be done with non-philosophy and let that doing speak for itself (7–8).

He says this about the future of non-philosophy: Non-philosophy's fruitlessness may have something useful about it, at least when the sense of usefulness is radically changed under the conditions of the radical immanence of the One. Non-philosophy models a way of thinking that is open to the construction of a radically different world and a radically different philosophy from those that structure our world. ...

In the face of the constant harassment that comes from media friendly images of the future, dystopian visions, and even everyday demands to constantly be worried about one's own future, non-philosophy joins with other forms of thought that demand a future to the measure of the human. A humane future is no future at all, but rather a kind of proliferation of the whyless now. In this way there is no future for non-philosophy because non-philosophy seeks to make meaning in a way that is strange to the norms of the philosophy-world. It is the very fruitlessness, the whylessness, that others accuse Laruelle of that is the good news of non-philosophy in the face of the failure of the world. ... This is a strange thought. It may even be the strangest thought to emerge from French philosophy to date (173–4).

This book is so far the best introduction to Laruelle. It makes it much easier to understand this thought of a person, who is a new ray of hope in philosophy. Smith successfully argues against the critiques of Laruelle, showing that in almost all cases, the critics have not properly understood the very basics of Laruelle's thought. This book is a valuable addition to the library of all interested in Laruelle in particular and Continental thought in general. It would be a great toolkit in the armoury of not only the Anglophone readers of Laruelle, but also those, who can read him in the language in which he writes, French.

Editor

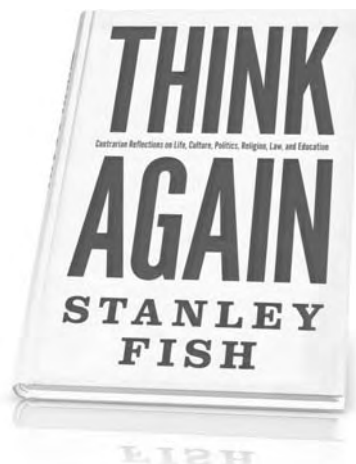
Prabuddha Bharata

MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.
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Think Again:
**Contrarian Reflections on Life, Culture,
Politics, Religion, Law, and Education**
Stanley Fish

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 2015. xx + 427 pp. \$29.95. HB. ISBN 9780691167718.



THE ESSAYS COLLECTED HERE are culled from the three hundred or so columns I wrote for the *New York Times* from 1995–2013. The order in which they appear is intended to bring out connections and themes that were perhaps not evident in their serial publication over a long period. One theme, often repeated, is that although the columns were published in the Opinion section of the newspaper, they are not, for the most part, opinion pieces. That is, they are less likely to declare a position on a disputed matter than to anatomise, and perhaps critique, the arguments deployed by opposing constituencies. There are two judgements one might make on a position: (1) the arguments put forward in support of it are weak and incoherent, and (2) it is wrong. These judgements, I contend, are logically independent of each other: it is quite possible that you could find the case being made for a position unpersuasive and still be persuaded of its rightness. Well, yes, you would be saying, I think those guys have it right, but the reasons they give for their conclusion (with which I agree) are contradictory and don't hold together. And conversely, you might be impressed by the elegance of the reasons put forward in defense of a point of view you nevertheless reject; you would be saying, yes, they have the better of it if the measure is logical cogency, but nevertheless, they're wrong.

Because I separate these two kinds of judgement—formal and substantive—a reader of these columns will often not know where I stand on the issue being discussed. The fact, for example, that I excoriate and ridicule the reasoning of professional atheists Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris does not mean that I am myself a theist; it just means that I find their arguments slipshod and even silly. I might well be of their mind at bottom and still think that they are poor advocates for the conviction we share. Many readers found my refusal to lay my substantive cards on the table infuriating and agreed with Larry, who sent in this comment on November 2, 2010: 'Could you do us all a favor and state in a simple declaration what you believe, because, man, you're killing me.'

Sorry, Larry, that's not what I am doing in these columns. If what you want are opinions and protestations of belief, there are plenty of places to find them, but not here. This is not to say that I make no strong assertions; only that what I assert doesn't take the form 'affirmative action is right' or 'affirmative action is wrong' but rather, the form 'this particular argument (for or against) doesn't prove what it claims to prove.' After I'm done with saying that, the substantive issue remains unaddressed, or at least unresolved, and my readers are no more in the know about where I come down than they were

at the beginning. One might say, then, that although I am writing in plain sight, I'm in hiding.

But not always. A number of columns are autobiographical and even confessional. A selection of these is presented in part 1 ('Personal Reflections') of this collections. There readers will learn about my anxieties, my aspirations, my eccentricities, my foibles, my father, and my obsessions—Frank Sinatra, Ted Williams, basketball, and Jews. What links the columns, even when their subject matter is disparate, is a relentless internality, a tendency to live 'in my head,' a preference for activities that are absorptive, an affinity for enclosures and closures, and a fear of anything new and open.

In part 2 ('Aesthetic Reflections'), I (inadvertently) reveal more of myself in a series of meditations on movies, television, art, and music. Not surprisingly, my affinity is for self-contained, highly structured artifacts that refuse political engagement and celebrate craft. Author Colm Toibin is in effect, my spokesman when he refuses to ground his art in autobiography. Writing is 'not therapy,' he declares, and I would add that writing is not self-expression or a call to justice or a thousand other things. Writing is the effort to make something out of words, and the political or sociological significance of the thing made is finally of less value than the process of making. Art, of course, must make use of political and social themes, but it is not in service to them; rather, it is the other way around. This is true even of country music, which, though it wears its politics (family values, patriotism, low-church Christianity) on its sleeve, is not aggressively political. The politics is just part of the package; it's not the message. The message is the unity and coherence of the country music vision of life, a vision that may or may not be true to the everyday experiences of actual people but is relentlessly true to the fictive world it ceaselessly elaborates.

My admiration for country music is of a piece with my admiration for Charlton Heston, whose work as an actor is often dismissed by those who dislike his politics. What does one thing have to do with the other? Heston, like Kim Novak, was the victim (as well as the beneficiary) of a God-given physical beauty; it was all too easy for critics of both actors to linger on their impressive surfaces and fail to see the sensitivity and inward fragility that marked their best performances.

In part 3 ('Cultural Reflections') I myself turn political, in a way. The politics is antiliberal. Liberalism, as a form of thought and a mode of political organization, privileges impartiality. The idea is to develop procedures that are to the side of or above or below partisan agendas, procedures the implementation of which will neither advance nor exclude anyone's vision of the good and the good life. My argument (somewhat in tension with the argument of part 2) is that there are no such procedures and that the talismanic values that supposedly accompany them—fairness, objectivity, neutrality—are either empty or filled with the substantive claims they supposedly exclude. The world of liberal abstractions has efficacy and relevance in the pages of theorists like John Rawls, but in the everyday world of local choices and decisions, one acts on the basis of what one believes and desires. There is no road from the precepts of high philosophy to the solution of any real-world problem. Your account of truth or evidence may be right or it may be wrong, but whichever it is, it will not generate recipes for action.

This is what I mean when I declare that philosophy doesn't matter, and this is also the lesson deconstructive or postmodernist thought ('otherwise known as 'French Theory') preaches when it debunks the idea of a master narrative from the vantage point of which undoubted facts and universally compelling values come clearly into view.

REPORTS



Spiritual Retreat for Devotees at Mayavati

The First Spiritual Retreat for Devotees Conducted at Mayavati from 10 to 16 November 2018

For the first time in its history, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, conducted a week-long spiritual retreat exclusively for the devotees of the Ramakrishna Order, from 10 to 16 November 2018, at the end of the guest-accommodation period. Variety of spiritual topics such as Bhagavadgita, *Vivekachudamani*, *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the history and significance of the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas, Swami Vivekananda's vision of Vedanta, meditation, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and spiritualising householder's life were discussed. There were many interactive sessions in the midst of the lush greenery of Mayavati near Swarupananda Point. Himalayan peaks visible from Mayavati were shown to the participants with detailed description along with their spiritual significance. Some swamis from Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati and Kolkata, guided all the sessions and answered the questions. Swamis Muktidananda, Adhyaksha, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati;

Shuddhidananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata; Madhurananda, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati; Narasimhananda, Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*; Divyakripananda, Associate Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*; and Shantachittananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, conducted the various sessions. There was an orientation programme in the beginning and valedictory session in the end. The participants were invited from various centres of the Order across India. By the end of the retreat, all the participants developed a special bond of spiritual friendship with each other. The programme also included sightseeing tours in and around Mayavati. The participants were also shown the inside of the main building of the ashrama, where restoration and conservation work is ongoing. The accommodation at Mayavati being limited, only 45 men and women could participate. A group photo of the participants of this unique spiritual retreat was also taken and circulated. The participants requested that such a retreat be arranged every year with in-depth studies and discussions on spiritual topics and scriptures.

Spiritual Retreat for Devotees at Mayavati





Inaugural Programme of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses at Belur Math

New Math Centre

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math was inaugurated in **Dublin, Ireland**, on 17 June. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, "Nivedita House", 17 Dromheath Gardens, Mulhuddart, Dublin D15 E762, Ireland', phone: 353-866015603 and email: <dublin@rkmm.org>. Special worship, speeches, and cultural events were held to mark the inauguration, which was attended by about 200 devotees and well-wishers.

New Mission Centre

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started in **Yadadri Bhuvanagiri** district, near Hyderabad, in Telangana. The address of the centre is 'Ramakrishna Mission, Saradanagar, Dist. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Telangana 508126', phone: 79016 96801 and email: <yadadri.bhuvanagiri@rkmm.org>.

New Mission Sub-Centre

A sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission, directly under the supervision of the headquarters at

Belur Math, has been started at **Shyamsayer** in Bardhaman. The address of the sub-centre is 'Ramakrishna Mission, Shyamsayer, Bardhaman, West Bengal 713101', phone: 98304 61857, and email: <shyamsayer@rkmm.org>.

Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA

The inaugural programme of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses was held at **Belur Math** from 10 to 12 September. On 10 September, nearly 4,000 students from various schools and colleges came to Belur Math in processions. A public meeting was held on that day in which there were talks and cultural events. The formal inaugural programme, which took place on 11 September, was presided over by Sri-mat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee; the British Deputy High Commissioner at Kolkata, Bruce Bucknell; Swami Suvirananda,

Opening of New Centre in Dublin, Ireland





Programme at Coimbatore

Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893



Programme at Coimbatore Vidyalaya

General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and others spoke in the programme which was attended by about 3,500 people. On the following day, 12 September, there was a devotees' convention in the morning and a youths' convention in the afternoon which were presided over respectively by Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Swami Surivananda. In all, about 9,500 people took part in the two conventions. Renowned musicians performed in the evenings of 11 and 12 September.

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names:

In India: Asansol: A public meeting on 30 June which was attended by about 600 devotees.

Bardhaman: A spiritual retreat on 12 August in which about 500 devotees took part.

Bengaluru: A four-day creative art camp from 30 July to 2 August in which 35 students from different art institutes participated. The young artists worked on a number of paintings and sculptures, all based on the theme 'Swamiji's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions'.

Chennai Math distributed about 12,50,000 pamphlets in English and Tamil containing three Chicago addresses of Swamiji to school and college students and the general public. Subsequently, based on these pamphlets, cultural competitions were conducted, in which hundreds of thousands of students and the general public took part. The prize distribution ceremony was held at a college in Coimbatore on 11 September, in which the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi delivered a lecture through videoconferencing. Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, and several others also spoke during the ceremony.

Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya: Cultural competitions in a school and a college in Coimbatore on 12 and 23 July. In all, 690 students took part in the competitions. At both the venues, the competitions were followed by a talk, awards ceremony, and a skit; cultural competitions in five educational institutions in Coimbatore between 2 and 21 August. In all, 535 students took

Interfaith Meet by Delhi Centre





Programme at Rajkot Centre



Programme at Cossipore Centre

Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA

part in the competitions. At all five venues, the competitions were followed by a talk, awards ceremony, and a skit; a public meeting was held on 11 September, which was presided over by Banwarilal Purohit, Governor of Tamil Nadu. A few dignitaries and about 700 students, staff, and devotees attended the programme.

Delhi centre conducted an interfaith meet on 11 September in which Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India, was the chief guest.

Guwahati centre held a grand procession and a public meeting on 11 September. Prof Jagdish Mukhi, Governor of Assam, among others, attended the meeting.

Jalpaiguri: Narayana seva on 15 August in which 140 poor people were sumptuously fed and given gifts of household articles. In the afternoon, Srimat Swami Shivamayanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered a special talk for nearly 200 devotees.

Lalgarh: Cultural competitions and speeches at a school on 27 August.

Madurai: Two personality development programmes on 1 and 13 August, which were attended by 280 students in all.

Malda: A devotees' convention on 8 July in which about 700 people took part.

Manasadwip: A youths' convention on 26 August in which 525 youths took part.

Rajkot centre conducted a seminar on 'Interfaith Harmony for a Global Civilization' on 24 June. It was inaugurated by O P Kohli, Governor

of Gujarat, and chaired by Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj. About 750 people of various faiths took part in the seminar. A lecture programme was held on 5 August attended by 150 devotees.

Salem: Cultural competitions in 425 schools and colleges of Salem and Namakkal districts in July and August, 41,953 students participated.

Shyampur Bati: A youths' convention on 21 August, in which about 200 youths were in attendance.

Swamiji's Ancestral House: A lecture on 30 June, which was attended by 300 people.

Silchar: A devotees' convention on 6 October and students' conventions on 7 and 8 October, which were attended by about 1,600 people in all.

The Government of West Bengal observed 11 September as Sampriti Divas, and the week following 11 September as Sampriti Saptah.

The following centres also commemorated the occasion with various programmes such as processions, public meetings, interfaith meetings, and cultural competitions in September. In **India:** Aalo, Advaita Ashrama (Kolkata), Agartala, Allahabad, Antpur, Asansol, Aurangabad, Bagda, Baghbazar, Balaram Mandir, Bamunmura, Bankura, Baranagar Math, Baranagar Mission, Barasat, Bardhaman, Barisha, Belagavi, Belgharia, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Chandipur, Chapra, Chennalpattu, Chennai Mission Ashrama, Chennai Sarada Vidyalaya, Chennai Students' Home, Coimbatore Math, Contai, Cooch Behar, Cossipore, Cuttack, Davanagere, Dehradun, Deoghar,



Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA, by Chicago Centre

Dibrugarh, Gadadhar Ashrama, Garbeta, Goa, Gol Park, Gourhati, Gurap, Halasuru, Hatamuniguda, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Jalpaiguri, Jammu, Jamshedpur, Jamtara, Jayrambati, Kadapa, Kanchipuram, Kankurgachhi, Kanpur, Karimganj, Katihar, Kayamkulam, Khetri, Kochi, Kozhikode, Lalgargh, Limbdi, Lucknow, Lumdung, Madurai, Malda, Malliankaranai, Manasadwip, Mangaluru, Medinipur, Mekhliganj, Mumbai, Muzaffarpur, Mysuru, Nagpur, Narainpur, Narendrapur, Narottam Nagar, Nattarampalli, Ooty, Pala, Patna, Ponnampet, Porbandar, Pune, Puri Math, Puri Mission, Purulia, Rahara, Raipur, Rajamahendravaram, Rajkot and its sub-centre in Ahmedabad, Ramanathapuram, Ramharipur, Ranchi Morabadi, Salem, Saradapitha, Sargachhi, Seva Pratishthan, Shillong, Shimla, Shyamla Tal, Sikra-Kulingram, Silchar, Srinagar, Swamiji's Ancestral House, Taki, Tamluk, Thrissur, Tirupati, Tiruvalla, Vadodara, Varanasi Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi Home of Service, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Vrindaban.

Outside India: Lusaka, Zambia: A public meeting on 8 July, which was attended by about 100 people.

Durban, South Africa: Fourteen special lectures and other programmes between 25 May and 7 July, which were attended by about 5,500 people in all.

On 7 September, the Governor of Illinois State, USA, issued a proclamation recognising 11 September 2018 as Swami Vivekananda Day in the State of **Illinois**.

Bangladesh: Comilla and Dhaka, Holland, Nepal, Singapore, South Africa: Durban and its sub-centres, **Sri Lanka, USA: Berkeley and New York Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center.**

Chicago, USA: A symposium on 'Vedanta' at Vivekananda Retreat, Ganges, on 29 September, and an interfaith meet in Chicago on 30 September, which were attended by about 400 people.

Kathmandu, Nepal: A public meeting on 29 September attended by about 300 people.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

In India: The **Belur Math** headquarters held a football tournament on Saradapitha playground from 20 to 26 May in which 16 teams from our schools and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in West Bengal took part. The Rahara team won the tournament. Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj gave away the prizes on 26 May.

Antpur Math conducted a spiritual retreat on 23 June, which was attended by about 200 devotees; a students' convention on 21 July, about 150 students and 20 teachers participated.

Chennai Mission Ashrama: An orientation programme for teachers on 14 July, in which about 180 teachers mainly from the schools run by the Ashrama participated.

Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya: An online quiz competition from October 2017 to September 2018, in which 3,308 students from 9 colleges participated.

Gurap: Two spiritual retreats on 27 May and



Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita by St Petersburg centre, Russia

1 July, in which about 300 devotees took part.

Kankurgachhi: A special lecture on 19 August, which was attended by about 600 people.

Katihar: Cultural competitions in September, in which 210 students took part.

Manasadwip: A procession, a panel discussion, and cultural programmes on 25 August, in which 750 delegates, mostly students, took part.

Medinipur: A spiritual retreat on 26 August, in which 450 devotees took part.

Mumbai: Seventeen programmes involving audio-visual presentations and quiz contests in 17 colleges in Mumbai and nearby areas from 12 December to 3 April, in which a total of about 3,000 students participated.

Rajkot centre conducted a meditation session on 10 June in which 550 devotees participated; A youths' convention, a teachers' seminar, and a meditation session on 10, 11, and 12 August. In all, about 1,800 people attended the programmes.

Silchar Ashrama conducted a students' and teachers' convention on 25 and 26 May, in which 216 students and 56 teachers from 36 schools participated.

Swamiji's Ancestral House held six lectures

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita at Manasadwip Centre

at the centre and elsewhere in Kolkata between 23 April and 11 May. In all, about 2,200 people attended the lectures. Four lectures at the centre and elsewhere in Kolkata between 28 May and 6 June. In all, about 1,300 people attended. Two lectures on 25 June and 4 July, which were attended by about 800 people. A lecture on 3 August attended by about 300 people.

Outside India: St Petersburg centre, Russia, conducted a public meeting at the Indian Consulate in St Petersburg on 20 May, which was attended by about 50 people.

News of Branch Centres

Madurai Math distributed buttermilk to about 2,500 people from 29 April to 3 May on the occasion of Chaitra Purnima festival.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj dedicated the new prayer hall and monks' quarters at **Goa** centre on 6 May.

Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated Nivedita Bhavan, the school building at **Baranagar Mission Ashrama**, on 14 May.

Palanisamy Sathasivam, Governor of Kerala, inaugurated the new blood bank at **Thiruvananthapuram** hospital on 19 May.

Swami Suvirananda presided over the public meeting held at **Dibrugarh** centre on 20 May to mark the taking over of Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samity, Dibrugarh, and starting of a branch of Ramakrishna Mission there.

Ponnampet centre held a three-day programme from 23 to 25 May to celebrate the



platinum jubilee of its hospital. Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj inaugurated Vivekananda Arogya Dhama, the new building for the naturopathy and yoga departments of the hospital, on 24 May. About 40 monks and many devotees attended the programmes.

The following centres held summer camps for students. The programme included chanting, bhajans, yogasanas, values education classes. **Chennai Math:** 1 to 31 May, 175 attended; **Chennai Mission Ashrama:** 6 to 27 May, 58 attended; **Hyderabad:** 8 April to 22 May, 2,900 attended; **Indore:** 25 to 29 April, 40 attended; **Kanpur:** 21 May to 1 July, 78 attended; **Kochi:** 23 to 29 April, 40 attended; **Limbd:** 18 to 23 April, 110 attended; **Madurai:** 2 to 18 May, 95 attended; **Nagpur:** 14 to 20 May, 136 attended; **Ponnampet:** 22 to 29 April, 115 attended; **Porbandar:** 8 May to 3 June, 85 attended; **Tirupati:** 29 April to 13 May, 80 attended; **Visakhapatnam:** 6 to 20 May, 110 attended.

Swami Suvirananda inaugurated the higher secondary section of **Baranagar Mission Ashrama's** school on 22 June.

Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief Minister of Assam, visited **Silchar** centre on 24 June.

Guwahati Ashrama conducted a free medical camp during Ambubachi Mela near Kamakhya Temple from 22 to 25 June in which 6,574 patients were treated.

Swami Suvirananda inaugurated the new extension to the school building and a dining-hall



Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Hospital of Ponnampet Centre

for girls at **Jhargram** centre on 12 May.

The 13th foundation day celebration and the annual convocation of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI) were held on the university's Belur campus on 4 July. In all, 204 students received their degrees. Swami Suvirananda presided over the programme.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the newly-built first floor of the monks' quarters at **Lucknow** Math on 6 July.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj dedicated Brahmananda Bhavan, the new office block, at **Kanpur** centre on 9 July.

Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, inaugurated the new dining-hall for boys at **Jhargram** centre on 10 July.

On the sacred occasion of Ratha Yatra on 14 July, **Puri Math** conducted a medical camp from 14 to 22 July in which about 300 patients were treated. The Math also served lemonade to about 10,500 pilgrims.

Puri Mission Ashrama served lemonade to about 10,000 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra

Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Ramakrishna Mission Shilpapitha, the Polytechnic Run by Belgharia Centre





Inauguration of the Swami Vivekananda Auditorium at Jammu Centre

festival. A medical camp was also set up on this occasion.

Bankura centre inaugurated its year-long centenary celebrations with a procession in Bankura city on 19 July. On 22 July, Swami Suvirananda presided over a public meeting and also inaugurated the centenary building on the Kenduadihi campus of the centre. About 400 people attended the programme.

Tathagata Roy, Governor of Tripura, visited **Agartala** centre on 22 July.

The new prayer hall and monks' quarters at **Narottam Nagar** centre were dedicated on 22 July.

Ramakrishna Mission Shilpapitha, the polytechnic run by **Belgharia** centre, celebrated its diamond jubilee on 25 July. Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj presided over the public meeting held in the morning. The public meeting held in the afternoon was presided over by Swami Suvirananda. Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India, addressed the meeting as the chief guest and also unveiled a statue of Swamiji on the college campus. A large number of students and devotees attended the programme.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj inaugurated the newly built extension to the vocational training centre of **Baghbazar Math** on 29 July. Swami Suvirananda attended the inauguration and addressed the public meeting held on this occasion. The training centre is located at

Pranakrishna Mukherjee Road, Kolkata.

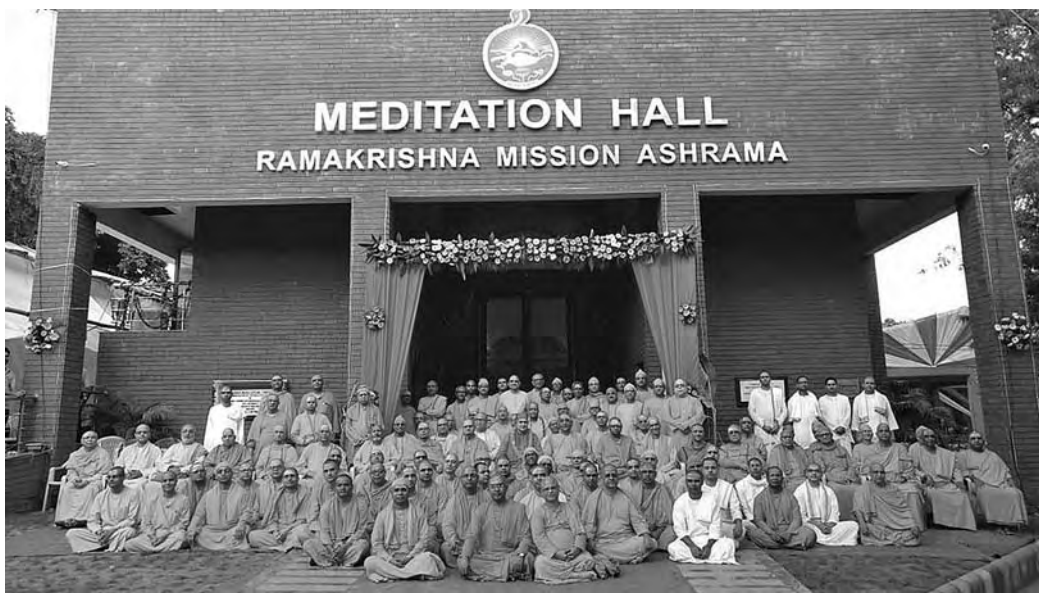
The under-14 and under-17 football teams of Narainpur school won the state-level Subroto Cup Football Tournament held at **Narainpur** from 20 to 22 July. The school also won the overall champions trophy.

A postgraduate student of the Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences of **Seva Pratishthan** secured first position in the final examination of MD (General Medicine) conducted by West Bengal University of Health Sciences this year.

A postgraduate student of the Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences of **Seva Pratishthan** secured first position in the final examination of DNB (in ENT discipline) conducted by the National Board of Examinations this year and received a gold medal.

A student of Vivekananda College of **Chennai Vidyapith** won a gold medal in the 400-metre relay race and a silver medal in the 200-metre race in the South Asian Junior Athletics Championships held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 5 and 6 May, and a bronze medal in the 400-metre relay race in the Asian Junior Athletics Championships held in Gifu, Japan, from 7 to 10 June.

Students of **Deoghar Vidyapith** secured the following ranks at the national level in the Sanskrit Olympiad 2017 conducted by Samskrita Bharati Educational Trust, Guntur: 1st rank (1



Sri Ramakrishna Temple Opening and the Diamond Jubilee of Chandigarh Centre

student), 3rd rank (2 students), 4th rank (4 students) and 5th rank (1 student).

Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, inaugurated the new solar plant and electric transformer at **Lucknow** hospital on 1 August.

Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the new poultry building at **Ranchi Morabadi** centre on 4 August in the presence of Sudarshan Bhagat, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Government of India, and other dignitaries. On 7 August, the golden jubilee celebration of Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra of the centre was also inaugurated by Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj. A documentary on Divyayan was released on this occasion.

The Governor of Karnataka felicitated the principal of **Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala** of **Mysuru** centre on 12 August for the excellent results of the Vidyashala students in the class 12 final examinations held this year.

P B Acharya, Governor of Nagaland, visited **Vivekananda Illam** (Vivekananda House) of **Chennai Math** on 24 August.

Dr Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office and Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India, inaugurated the newly built Swami Vivekananda

Auditorium at **Jammu** centre on 26 August. The programme was attended by about 200 people.

Tathagata Roy, Governor of Meghalaya, visited **Shillong** centre on 26 August and **Agartala** centre on 28 August.

A student of **Mysuru Vidyashala** was declared the best cadet of NCC group headquarters, Mysuru, in the junior division for the year 2017-18.

Rahara Boys' Home celebrated its platinum jubilee on 1 September with special worship, procession, and cultural programmes. About 15,000 students and devotees attended the programme. Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Srimat Swami Shivamayanandaji Maharaj, Swami Suvirananda, and others spoke in the public meeting held on that day. On 14 September, Dr Partha Chatterjee, Minister of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, inaugurated the newly built extension to the Vivekananda Centenary College building on the centre's campus, and Swami Suvirananda unveiled a bronze statue of Swamiji in the new building.

Chandigarh centre conducted a three-day programme from 7 to 9 September in connection with the consecration of its newly-built Sri Ramakrishna Temple and the diamond jubilee



Opening of Primary School by Lumdung Centre

of the centre. Prof Kaptan Singh Solanki, Governor of Tripura, inaugurated the new multipurpose hall and released a commemorative volume on 7 September. The new residential building for monks was also inaugurated on that day. Swami Gautamanandaji consecrated the new temple on 8 September, the sacred birthday of Swami Advaitanandaji Maharaj. Public meetings and cultural events were held on all three days, in which about 130 monks and 2,000 devotees participated.

On 11 September, **Lumdung** centre inaugurated its first service activity by opening a primary school, which is located, for the time being, on the campus of a government school in Lumdung.

Raipur centre released a digital archive of 56 years of *Vivek Jyoti*, the Hindi journal published by the centre, on 11 September.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj dedicated Sarada Mandir, the new annexe to the Residential College building of **Narendrapur Ashrama**, on 16 September. Swami Surirananda inaugurated the newly set-up digital library there. Several dignitaries and a large number of monks, students, and devotees attended the programme.

Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj unveiled a fibreglass statue of Swamiji at **Purulia Vidyapith** on 19 September.

The headmistress of the Higher Secondary School (Main) of **Chennai Mission Ashrama** received Dr Radhakrishnan Award on 5 September, the Teachers' Day, from the Department of

School Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, for her contribution to the field of education.

The School Education Department, Government of West Bengal, presented the Best School Award to **Purulia Vidyapith** in a function held in Kolkata on 5 September. The award consisted of a memento, a certificate, and a sum of 50,000 rupees.

Integrating Spirituality and Organizational Leadership (ISOL) Global Foundation presented the 'Sri Ramakrishna Award for Universal Values' to **Antpur Math** on 11 September at a programme held in Chicago, USA.

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) of **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalyaya** obtained eighth position in the national level grading of nearly 5,000 private ITIs by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India.

Two students of **Deoghar Vidyapith** secured first and second positions in the essay competition, followed by oral presentation, conducted by S N Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Kolkata, in September 2018. Apart from them, two other students of the Vidyapith also secured scholarships from the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) by clearing the National Talent Search Examination 2018.

A class-12 student of **Narainpur** centre was selected for the under-18 national football team and played in the Asian Schools Football Championship held in Agra from 20 to 30 September.



Diamond Jubilee celebration of Visakhapatnam Centre

Durga Puja, in image, was celebrated at 26 centres, namely Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar—under Agartala, Ghatshila, Guwahati, Gwalior, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kailashahar, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella—under Sohra/Cherrapunjee, Shillong, Silchar and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama, and at the Shyamsayer sub-centre of headquarters.

Biplab Kumar Deb, Chief Minister of Tripura, attended Durga Puja at **Kailashahar** centre on 16 October, the Saptami day.

Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, attended Durga Puja at **Patna** centre on 17 October, the Ashtami day.

Visakhapatnam centre celebrated the diamond jubilee of its high school from 2 to 7 October with public meetings, a teachers' workshop, an alumni meet, and cultural programmes. Swami Suvirananda presided over the public meeting held on 6 October. A commemorative volume was also released on the occasion.

Ramakrishna Math, **Shyampukur Bati**, recently purchased a nearby four-storey building for extension of its activities. Swami Suvirananda inaugurated the building on 3 October, the sacred birthday of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj.

In the concluding phase of its year-long diamond jubilee celebration, **Purulia Vidyapith** held the following programmes from 5 to 10 October: public meetings, an alumni meet, cultural competitions for school students, two

seminars for college students and teachers, educational exhibition, dramas, and musical concerts. Many former students of the Vidyapith, students, and teachers from different educational institutions, and devotees attended the programmes.

On 9 October, Pema Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, and Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, laid the foundation stone for the residential school and other buildings of **Lumdung** centre. A number of state legislators, government officers, and about 5,000 people attended the programme.

Agartala centre conducted a blood donation camp on 4 October in which 37 persons donated blood.

Coimbatore Mission Vidyalyaya conducted a state-level basketball tournament on 28, 29, and 30 September, in which 16 teams participated.

Ramharipur centre held a medical camp on 2 October, in which about 600 people from 20 villages were treated by 11 doctors.

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister for Science and Technology, Government of India, visited **Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Phoenix**, on 19 May.

Sushma Swaraj, Minister for External Affairs, Government of India, visited **Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Phoenix**, on 6 June.

The boys' and girls' teams of Swami Vivekananda College, **Fiji** won the Fiji Schools National Swimming Championship. The two teams secured 45 gold, 32 silver, and 17 bronze medals.



*Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of
Swami Vivekananda's Visit to Japan*

Thirty students of **Dhaka** school had appeared in the Secondary (Class 10) examination conducted by Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka, this year. Of them, 29 passed with the first division marks (60% or above in the aggregate) and 1 failed; 3 students secured star marks (75% or above in the aggregate).

On 8 July, **Boston** centre, USA, celebrated the 125th anniversary of Swamiji's arrival in Boston. The programme consisted of music, group meditation, and a slide show of the events around Swamiji's arrival there.

Japan centre commemorated the 125th anniversary of Swamiji's visit to Japan by holding public meetings and cultural events in Tokyo and Kobe in Japan on 19 May and 30 June. Many people took part in both the programmes. Besides these, a group of devotees also paid their respects to Swamiji at the harbour in Kobe where Swamiji had landed in 1893 on his way to the US.

Durban centre, **South Africa**, observed the

Nelson Mandela International Day on 18 July. J P Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, among others, addressed a gathering of 160 people.

The President of Singapore, Halimah Yacob and the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office of Singapore, Indranee Rajah visited **Singapore** Ashrama on 19 and 20 August respectively.

Durga Puja, in image, was performed at Durban—South Africa, centre and its sub-centres at Chatsworth and Pietermaritzburg, Lusaka—Zambia, Mauritius Ashrama, and 14 centres in Bangladesh, namely Baliati, Barisal, Chandpur, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Habiganj, Jessore, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Rangpur and Sylhet, and at the Narail sub-centre of Jessore Ashrama.

At **Dhaka** centre, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina; Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mohammed Nasim; Railway Minister, Mujibul Haque Mujib; Mayor of South Dhaka, Sayed Khokan; and several other distinguished persons attended the celebration on different days of the worship. In all, about one lakh people attended the celebration.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the new extension to the monks' quarters at **Durban** centre on 28 September.

New images of the Holy Trio were installed in the shrine at the Ganges retreat of **Chicago** centre, USA, on 29 September.

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, High Commissioner

Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Visit to Japan





Values Education Programme by Jalpaiguri Centre



Values Education Programme by Gourhati Centre

of India to Bangladesh, inaugurated the newly built Vivekananda Bhavan and Brahmananda Bhavan at **Chandpur** centre, **Bangladesh**, on 5 October.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Delhi centre held 1) Thirty-six values education workshops between 11 and 27 April, which were attended by 2,927 teachers. The workshops were held in eight states apart from Chandigarh and Delhi; 2) Twenty-one values education workshops between 2 and 29 May, which were attended by 1,182 teachers. The workshops were held in ten states apart from Delhi; 3) Twelve values education workshops between 1 and 27 June, which were attended by thirty-six principals and 792 teachers. The workshops were held in eight states; 4) Fifty-four values education workshops between 9 July and 21 August, which were attended by 602 principals and 3,054 teachers. The workshops were held in 12 states apart from Delhi; 5) Nineteen values education workshops in different places all over India between 10 and 27 September; they were attended by 1,159 teachers in all.

Taki Ashrama held a students' convention on 11 April, attended by about 200 students from different high schools in Taki.

Salem centre conducted 1) a three-day residential values education programme from 26 to 28 April, which was attended by 220 students from 8 schools; 2) six values education programmes at six colleges in Salem district from 3

to 26 September, which were attended by 1,130 students in all.

Kochi centre held a youth camp from 10 to 13 May in which thirty youths took part.

Jalpaiguri centre, in association with Kankurgachhi Math, held Ratha Yatra—procession with Swamiji's carriage, personality development workshops, public meetings, exhibitions, film shows, and cultural programmes at a number of places in four districts of Assam from 15 to 25 May.

Gourhati centre conducted values education programmes at 8 nearby schools from February to May; altogether 1,500 students attended the programmes.

Hyderabad Math held two youths' camps—one on 30 June and 1 July, and the other on 14 July. In all, about 400 youths participated in the camps.

Mumbai Ashrama conducted a students' workshop at its rural centre in Sakwar on 22 April. About 120 students took part in the day-long workshop.

Rajkot centre held 1) Sixteen values education programmes in the month of July, which were attended by a total of 2,620 students; 2) Seventeen values education programmes in the month of August, which were attended by 4,396 students. The centre also held a residential youths' camp on 18 and 19 August, in which 59 college students took part; 3) Twelve values education programmes in the centre as well as in different schools and colleges between 7 and

19 September. The programmes were attended by 2,925 students.

Chennai Students' Home conducted a personality development programme spread over five Saturdays between 30 June and 28 July, in which 55 students from 8 polytechnic colleges participated.

Chennai Math conducted, in association with another organisation, a day-long workshop on youth empowerment in Chennai on 15 September, which was attended by 250 people from different professional fields.

Gadadhar Ashrama conducted three students' conventions on 24, 25, and 26 September at three schools in Hooghly district, which were attended by about 900 students in all.

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)

Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya conducted four cleaning drives in July in which the Vidyalaya students cleaned a public road and the premises of a school and two government offices; three cleaning drives in August in which the Vidyalaya students cleaned Mettupalayam railway station, a public road, and an office of the forest department; three cleaning drives in September in which the Vidyalaya students cleaned a school, a temple, and a public road.

Guwahati centre held a cleanliness march on 15 August. A school campus was also cleaned on that day.

Kamarpukur centre conducted a cleanliness

*Personality Development Programme by
Chennai Students' Home*



drive at Kamarpukur village on 27 May, 24 June, and 30 September.

Mangaluru Ashrama conducted the following activities: in **May**: (i) five cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving about 4,500 volunteers, (ii) a campaign in which 1,250 volunteers reached out to nearly 2,350 households in Mangaluru and spread awareness about cleanliness, and (iii) cleanliness drives in 85 villages of Dakshina Kannada district in which about 6,800 people took part; in **June and July**: (i) nine cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving about 86,550 volunteers, (ii) daily awareness campaign for 38 days in which 2,450 volunteers reached out to nearly 4,680 households in Mangaluru and spread awareness about cleanliness, and (iii) cleanliness drives in 138 villages of Dakshina Kannada district in which about 13,675 people took part.

Relief

Winter Relief: The following centres distributed blankets and winter wear to needy people:

Aalo: 180 blankets, 577 jackets, and 135 sweaters from 10 January to 19 April. **Asansol**: 477 sweatshirts from 10 to 26 March. **Bhubaneswar**: 492 sweaters from 1 to 30 March. **Coimbatore Math**: 350 blankets on 11 October. **Cossipore**: 300 blankets from 29 September to 4 October. **Gadadhar Ashrama**: 150 blankets on 26 September. **Gourhati**: 16 shawls on 22 September. **Hatamuniguda**: 492 sweaters/sweatshirts from 31 March to 26 April. **Jamtara**: 150 blankets on 13

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan by Guwahati Centre



October. **Jalpaiguri:** 3,372 blazers, 2,591 jackets, and 3,635 sweaters from 17 to 31 March. **Karimganj:** 3,748 sweaters from 22 April to 25 September. **Naora:** 2,642 sweaters/jackets/sweatshirts from 4 to 8 October. **Purulia:** 300 blankets, 292 blazers, 831 jackets, 801 sweaters, and 629 sweatshirts from 12 November to 18 December 2017. **Rahara:** 5 jackets, 433 sweaters, and 396 sweatshirts on 6 and 22 April. **Rajkot:** 176 jackets, 5,260 sweaters, and 5,404 sweatshirts from 19 January to 6 March. **Ranchi Morabadi:** 25 blazers and 99 sweatshirts among men from 6 April to 23 August. **Saradapitha:** 992 blankets, 217 chaddars, and 496 jackets from 5 December to 25 January 2018. **Sarisha:** 300 blankets from 25 December to 25 January. **Shivanahalli:** 1,345 jackets and 1,502 sweatshirts from 20 January to 20 March. **Sohra (Cherrapunjee):** 1,352 jackets and 1,439 sweaters from 3 to 29 December. **Shyamla Tal:** 326 blankets, 1,576 jackets, 1,631 sweaters, and 90 sweatshirts from 7 November to 25 March. **Tamluk:** 1,000 blankets, 100 chaddars, and 1,398 sweaters from 11 December to 3 February. **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama:** 221 sweaters, 190 jackets, and 240 coats from 19 August to 9 October. **Vrindaban:** 2,130 sweaters and 3,045 sweatshirts from 2 to 20 February.

Fire Relief: Arunachal Pradesh: In response to an accidental fire which had destroyed a house, **Aalo** centre distributed 9 blankets, 4 tops, 2 T-shirts, 5 jackets, 7 trousers, 2 sweaters, and a set of utensils (containing a *karahi*, a pot, a kettle, a bucket, 4 plates, 4 bowls, a ladle, a jug,

a tumbler, and a mug) to a family and stationery (notebooks, pen, and pencils) to 2 students in Eyi village of West Siang district on 11 March; In the wake of a major fire in the New Market in Aalo, West Siang district, on 16 May, in which 41 houses were burnt down, **Aalo** centre distributed 60 ladies' trousers, 60 ladies' T-shirts, 85 gents' T-shirts, 85 trousers, 145 jackets, 145 blankets, and 41 sets of utensils (each set containing a *karahi*, a pot, a kettle, a bucket, 4 plates, 4 bowls, a ladle, a jug, a tumbler, a mug, and a tea pan) among 41 affected families on 27 May.

Assam: In response to a fire accident at New Colony in Pandu, **Guwahati** centre distributed 11 mattresses, 11 bed-sheets, 11 mosquito-nets, and 22 pillows among 5 affected families on 29 July 2018; In response to a fire accident at Bishfuti Road in Silchar in which 14 houses were gutted, **Silchar** Ashrama distributed 25 dhotis, 22 shirts, 22 trousers, 11 salwar-kameez (ladies' garments), 22 saris, 20 mosquito-nets, 12 kg milk powder, 44 packets of biscuits, and 14 stoves among 14 victim families on 23 May.

Odisha: Bhubaneswar centre distributed 100 blankets and 100 saris from 1 to 5 January among the families of the 20 houses that had been burnt down in a tragic fire in Palputa village in Cuttack district on 8 December 2017.

Tamil Nadu: (a) On 16 September, **Chengalpattu** centre handed over 5 saris, 2 dhotis, 4 shirts, 4 trousers, 4 ladies' garments, 2 towels, and 3 cooking pots to a family of Mambakkam village in Kanchipuram district whose thatched

Winter Relief by Almora Centre



Blanket Distribution by Aalo Centre





Fire Relief by Chennai Math

roof house had been razed to the ground in a fire incident. (b) In the wake of a devastating fire accident in a hamlet of Tiruvarur district, in which 43 houses were completely gutted, **Chennai Math** distributed 43 relief kits to the affected families on 18 July. Each kit consisted of 10 kg rice, 3 kg dal, 500 gram flour, 900 gram vermicelli, 2.5 litres of edible oil, 2 kg spices, 2 kg salt, 1 kg gur (molasses), 200 gram milk powder, 1 kg sugar, 2 cooking vessels, 1 cooker, 1 batter vessel, 4 pans, 3 bowls, 2 jugs, 5 plates, 1 spice container, 1 filter plate, 1 cooking pot, 1 tub, 1 water pot, 9 tumblers, 1 scythe, 6 ladles, 1 tea/coffee pan, 1 tea filter, 1 vegetable slicer, 1 measuring vessel, 2 tiffin carriers, 3 plastic containers, 1 bucket, 1 mug, 2 lids, 1 bed-sheet, 2 pillows, 2 mats, 3 bars of bathing soap, 5 bars of washing soap, 1 tube of toothpaste, and 5 toothbrushes.

West Bengal: Responding to a fire accident in Siliguri, in which 4 houses were completely gutted, **Darjeeling** centre distributed 4 beds,

Fire Relief by Bhubaneswar Centre



Fire Relief by Chengalpattu Centre

4 mattresses, 8 bed-sheets, 10 pillows, 11 pillow covers, 4 mosquito-nets, 4 ceiling fans, 4 kerosene stoves, and 4 sets of utensils (each set containing a handi, a *karahi*, 4 plates, 4 glasses, a ladle, 4 bowls, 4 spoons, a pressure cooker, 2 cooking vessels, a rolling pin, a saucepan, a baking pan, a jug, a tong, an iron-net, and a bowl) among 4 affected families from 1 April to 4 June.

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: **India: Aalo:** 95 T-shirts, 286 trousers, 88 tops, and 170 belts on 14 and 18 March; 174 shirts, 133 T-shirts, 587 trousers, 176 tops, and 170 belts from 10 January to 19 April; 57 ladies' trousers, 47 gents' trousers, and 104 jackets on 8 May. **Almora:** 6 pairs of shoes from 13 November to 16 February. **Antpur:** 201 school bags from 20 to 28 February. **Asansol:** 150 saris, 392 shirts, 559 trousers, and 295 T-shirts from 10 to 26 March. **Aurangabad:** 4,004 shirts from 12 October to 24 March. **Baganchra** (under

Fire Relief by Silchar Centre





Distress Relief by Belgharia Centre



Distress Relief by Chapra Centre

headquarters): 300 dhotis and 300 saris on 7 October. **Bagda:** 463 leggings, 1,063 tops, 1,753 shirts, 1,037 T-shirts, 3,025 trousers, and 239 school bags from 23 September to 28 March; 50 dhotis, 56 saris, 15 salwar-kameez (ladies' garments), 50 shirts, and 20 sets of children's garments from 8 to 12 April; 100 lungis and 460 saris on 7 and 8 October. **Baghbazar:** 300 saris, 2,256 shirts, 2,360 trousers, and 930 belts/wallets from 3 January to 15 March; 102 shirts, 1,054 trousers, and 1,615 belts/wallets on 1 April. **Bamunmura:** 1,276 T-shirts, 322 belts, 96 wallets, and 201 school bags from 15 February to 24 March; 6 bed-sheets, 6 shirts, 6 T-shirts, and pieces of cloth for 27 shirts and 2 trousers on 23 and 24 May. **Bankura:** 250 school bags from 17 to 21 March. **Barasat:** 196 dhotis and 447 saris from 7 to 15 October. **Bardhaman:** 500 dhotis, 500 saris, and 250 school bags from 13 February to 31 March. **Barisha:** 249 tops, 4 tunics, 65 other ladies' garments, and 535 shirts from 3 to 25 March. **Barisha:** 100 dhotis, 35 saris, and 58 shirts from 3 to 31 March. **Belgharia:** 1,120 dhotis, 3,060 saris, 1,100 kurtas, and 80 school bags from 1 November to 1 March; 40 bedsheets, 27 mats, and 1 lakh halogen tablets on 20 April and 21 July. **Bhopal:** 320 shirts, 678 T-shirts, and 1,389 trousers from 20 to 24 March; Bhopal: 550 shirts, 250 T-shirts, and 800 trousers on 23 and 24 October. **Bhubaneswar:** 1,229 shirts and 597 trousers from 1 to 30 March. **Chandipur:** 117

saris on 18 February; 43 saris on 24 March. **Chapra:** 200 school bags on 18 and 19 March; 503 shirts and 482 trousers from 23 May to 6 July. **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya:** 1,300 shirts and 1,300 trousers from 4 July to 26 August. **Contai:** 200 saris, 504 shirts, and 200 school bags from 25 September to 20 March. **Cooch Behar:** 20 dhotis, 156 saris, 4 lungis, and 2 *thaans*, large pieces of cloth, on 8 January; 151 ladies' dresses, 259 ladies' shirts, 766 tops, 457 shirts, 386 T-shirts, 565 trousers, 704 sweaters, 1,283 sweatshirts, and 200 school bags from 11 to 25 March. **Darjeeling:** 320 dhotis, 150 saris, 3,244 leggings, 5,389 tops, 5,709 shirts, and 4,656 trousers from 28 May to 18 March. **Davanagere:** 8,000 notebooks, 6,000 pens, and 2,000 pencils from 31 July to 6 August. **Dibrugarh:** 100 dhotis and 150 saris on 7 October. **Gadadhar Ashrama:** 83 school bags from 27 February to 23 March; 151 school bags from 27 February to 27 May; 269 saris and 30 children's dresses from 25 September to 10 October. **Ghatshila:** 1,049 leggings, 553 tops, 521 shirts, 558 trousers, 445 belts, and 445 wallets from 31 December to 27 February. **Gol Park:** 199 school bags from 4 to 7 April. **Gourhati:** 105 dhotis, 105 upper wrappers, 116 adults' garments, 134 children's garments, 47 towels, 350 belts, 400 wallets, and 250 school bags from 14 September and 13 March; 1,003 shirts, 1,002 trousers, and 20 saris from 22 September to 13 October. **Gurap:** 250 school bags



Distress Relief by Gol Park, Kolkata



Distress Relief by Kankurgachhi, Kolkata

from 8 to 17 March; 25 school bags and 25 umbrellas on 15 June; 66 shirts, 111 dhotis, 194 saris, and 79 children's garments from 12 to 15 October. **Guwahati:** 1,046 shirts, 212 T-shirts, and 892 trousers from 13 May to 4 June; 620 shirts on 15 July; 220 shirts and 212 trousers on 4 August; 303 shirts, 124 T-shirts, and 203 trousers from 4 to 26 August; 370 saris on 9 October. **Haripad:** 4,400 notebooks from 1 April to 31 July. **Hatamuniguda:** 302 leggings, 302 tops, 182 shirts, and 182 trousers from 16 to 27 March; 145 leggings, 145 tops, 347 shirts, and 347 trousers from 31 March to 26 April; 255 leggings/ladies' trousers, 255 tops, 486 shirts, 486 trousers, and 741 sweaters/sweatshirts from 5 to 27 May; 354 shirts, 427 T-shirts, 115 trousers, 148 tops, 53 sweaters, and 300 sweatshirts among women, and 397 shirts, 41 trousers, and 21 sweatshirts among men from 1 to 18 June. **Ichapur:** 1,027 leggings, 1,009 tops, 1,056 shirts, 535 trousers, 505 belts/wallets, and 250 school bags from 27 December to 15 March. **Jalpaiguri:** 2,956 leggings/

trousers, 3,068 tops, 3,222 shirts, 17 T-shirts, 3,146 trousers, 1,988 belts, 4,897 pairs of shoes, and 2,624 wallets from 17 to 31 March; 1,000 blankets from 5 to 27 January, and 1,354 dhotis and 2,885 saris from 2 February to 3 March; 298 saris on 12 October. **Jamtara:** 1,200 shirts, 870 trousers, 821 jackets among men, and 690 tops and 299 jackets among women from 31 May to 5 July. **Kamarpukur:** 251 school bags on 6 March; 200 school bags on 22 May. **Kankurgachhi:** 250 school bags, 416 textbooks, and 2,050 exercise books from 23 February to 28 March; 100 dhotis and 200 saris on 7 October. **Karimganj:** 189 ladies' trousers, 189 tops, 484 shirts, 484 gents' trousers, 1,244 sweaters, and 484 belts from 11 to 20 March; 841 shirts, 368 trousers, and 1,060 belts/wallets among men, and 1,119 shirts, 690 trousers, and 259 wallets among women from 22 April to 25 September. **Kathamrita Bhavan** (sub-centre of Shyampukur Bati, Kolkata): 200 school bags from 25 to 30 April; 200 saris, 200 dhotis, and 200 upper wrappers on 26 and 28

Distress Relief by Hatamuniguda Centre



Distress Relief by Jalpaiguri Centre





Distress Relief by Katihar Centre



Distress Relief by Nagpur Centre

October. **Katihar:** 450 dhotis and 2,020 saris from 27 February to 18 March. **Koyilandy:** 750 geometry boxes, 3,000 notebooks, 1,500 pencils, and 1,500 pens on 14 and 15 May, and 295 blankets on 20 and 21 May; 105 blankets on 24 June. **Limbdi:** 1,110 kg wheat from 1 to 31 May; 210 school uniforms on 14 July; 850 notebooks on 30 and 31 August. **Lucknow:** 4,741 leggings, 1,886 T-shirts, and 2,510 trousers from 7 September to 22 January. **Madurai:** 1,450 notebooks on 9 July. **Malda:** 248 saris, 97 dhotis, 600 shirts, 600 trousers, and 147 children's garments from 15 September to 13 October. **Manasadwip:** 787 saris from 10 to 14 October. **Mangaluru:** 5,729 shirts and 5,078 trousers from 19 February to 17 March. **Mayavati:** 30 jumpsuits, 18 kaptans, 19 tops, 1,370 other ladies' garments, 1,573 shirts, 1,572 trousers, 938 belts, and 156 wallets from 23 December to 22 February. **Mekhliganj:** 100 school bags from 15 April to 5 May. **Muzaffarpur:** 2,147 shirts, 1,002 trousers, and 1,128 belts/wallets from 11 to 25 March. **Nagpur:** 1,194 tops,

956 shirts, 200 T-shirts, and 1,494 trousers from 4 December to 7 March; 1,058 school uniforms, 3,174 notebooks, and 1,058 pens from 12 July to 1 August. **Naora:** 2,025 saris, 1,030 dhotis, 162 school bags, and 1 lakh halogen tablets from 21 January to 25 March; 333 plastic sheets on 15 June; 200 dhotis and 1,012 shirts among men, 900 saris and 1,086 tops among women, and 666 children's garments from 4 to 12 October. **Narottam Nagar:** 121 tops, 115 tunics, 57 other ladies' garments, 20 shirts, 49 T-shirts, 38 trousers, 927 belts, and 320 wallets from 18 to 30 March; 715 shirts, 171 T-shirts, and 886 trousers among men, and 694 tops, 694 trousers, 515 sweaters, and 293 sweatshirts among women from 26 August to 16 September. **Nattarampalli:** 80 ladies' dresses, 690 shirts, and 1,065 trousers from 5 to 12 April; 250 shirts, 281 T-shirts, and 515 trousers from 19 to 25 May. **Ootacamund:** 300 blankets on 30 May and 1 June. **Patna:** 204 school bags on 5 and 10 March; 2,000 shirts and 2,000 trousers from 7 to 9

Distress Relief by Karimganj Centre



Distress Relief by Koyilandy Centre





Distress Relief by Puri Mission Centre



Distress Relief by Rahara Centre

October. **Pune:** 3,035 shirts, 3,994 tops, and 2,726 trousers from 6 December to 23 February. **Puri Math:** 1,000 shirts/T-shirts and 1,000 trousers from 11 to 24 August; 1,000 shirts/T-shirts and 1,000 trousers from 11 to 24 August. **Puri Mission:** 3,000 shirts and 1,308 T-shirts from 27 December to 23 February. **Purulia:** 9 jumpsuits, 125 leggings, 1,515 tops, 2,532 shirts, 128 T-shirts, 4,006 trousers, 367 containers, and spoons, 367 kg health drink *Nutrimix* and 1,468 bars of soap from 22 September to 20 March. **Rahara:** 139 shirts, 35 T-shirts, 124 trousers, and 258 tops on 6 and 22 April; 679 shirts, 361 T-shirts, 729 trousers/denims, 20 jackets, 288 sweaters, and 1,680 sweatshirts among men, and 736 shirts, 324 T-shirts, 7 jackets, 586 sweaters, and 410 sweatshirts among women from 2 May to 15 July. **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 500 saris, 746 shirts, and 249 school bags from 22 February to 10 March. **Rajkot:** 970 shirts, 588 T-shirts, and 1,806 trousers from 19 September to 6 March. **Ramharipur:** 1,000 dhotis and 250 school bags from 17 May to 22 February; 1,137 ladies' shirts, 565 ladies' trousers, 1,315 shirts, 891 gents' trousers,

Distress Relief by Ramharipur Centre

830 sweaters, and 746 sweatshirts from 9 March to 3 April. **Ranchi Morabadi:** 129 saris among women, 350 shirts, 315 belts, and 1,000 wallets among men, and 1,248 pairs of shoes from 6 April to 23 August. **Saradapitha:** 341 saris, 250 school bags, and 295 mosquito-nets from 18 January to 8 February; 12 kg flattened rice, 30 packets of cake, 3 kg puffed rice, and 271 packets of biscuits among 80 families in Howrah district on 31 August; 4 kg rice, 100 packets of biscuits, and 10 packets of cake on 29 September. **Shimla:** 340 shirts/T-shirts and 285 jackets/sweaters/sweatshirts among women, and 330 shirts/T-shirts, 480 trousers, 1,500 socks/mufflers, and 620 jackets/sweaters/sweatshirts among men from 15 to 31 March. **Shivanahalli:** 3,020 shirts and 124 trousers from 20 January to 20 March. **Shyamla Tal:** 470 leggings / trousers, 886 shirts / tops, 375 assorted garments for ladies, 942 shirts, 942 trousers, 650 belts, and 320 wallets from 7 November to 25 March. **Sikra Kulin-gram:** 251 school bags from 12 January to 8 March; 158 school bags from 21 March to 10 May. **Sohra (Cherrapunjee):** 82 jumpsuits, 11,416

Distress Relief by Narottam Nagar Centre





Distress Relief by Sohra (Cherrapunjee) Centre



Distress Relief by Vrindaban Centre

tops, 1,980 shirts, 1,980 T-shirts, and 1,980 trousers from 3 to 29 December. **Taki:** 248 school bags on 7 March; 199 school bags on 11 April; 220 saris on 8 October. **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama:** 60 shirts, 150 T-shirts, and 424 trousers among men, and 331 saris, 86 tops, 7 shirts, 132 trousers, and 11 leggings among women from 19 August to 9 October. **Vrindaban:** 738 shirts, 693 T-shirts, 4,654 other gents' garments, and 1,952 ladies' garments from 2 to 20 February; 460 kg rice, 460 kg flour, 115 kg dal, 115 kg cooking oil, 230 kg salt, 115 kg sugar, 23 kg tea leaves, 46 kg milk powder, 230 bars of bathing soap, 230 bars of washing soap, and 230 packets of washing powder on 18 April; 1,600 saris and 1,600 pairs of footwear from 10 to 17 June; 200 kg rice, 200 kg flour, 50 kg dal, 50 kg mustard oil, 10 kg turmeric powder, 100 kg salt, 10 kg tea leaves, 20 kg milk powder, 50 kg sugar, and 100 bars of bathing soap among 100 old women in Vrindaban on 31 August; 430 kg rice, 430 kg flour, 107 kg dal, 107 kg edible oil, 215 kg salt, 215 packets of coriander powder, 43 kg milk powder, 21 kg tea leaves, 107 kg sugar, 215 bars of bathing soap, and

215 packets of washing powder on 9 October. **Bangladesh: Baliati:** 92 children's garments on 19 October. **Chittagong:** 1,000 kg rice, 100 kg dal, 100 litres of edible oil, and 100 kg salt on 31 March; 3,000 kg rice, 300 kg dal, 300 kg edible oil, 150 saris, and 160 children's garments from 5 to 14 October. **Dhaka:** 750 saris, 750 kg flour, 750 kg semolina, 750 litres of edible oil and 750 kg sugar in October. **Dinajpur:** 1,361 saris and 41 dhotis in October.

Economic Rehabilitation: The following centres distributed, under self-employment programme, various items shown in brackets, to poor and needy people in their respective areas: **Chandipur:** 2 sewing machines on 24 March; 2 sewing machines on 5 June; 4 machines on 9 August. **Chengalpattu:** 1 sewing machine on 20 July. **Guwahati:** 2 sewing machines on 20 July. **Khetri** 114 sewing machines on 9 December; 1 machine on 27 September. **Taki:** 12 rickshaw trolleys on 11 April; 114 fishing nets from 25 to 27 June. **Zambia: Lusaka** centre handed over 2 sewing machines to a skill development training institute on 28 August.

Economic Rehabilitation by Guwahati Centre



Economic Rehabilitation by Chandipur Centre





Economic Rehabilitation by Taki Centre



Rehabilitation of an Old Widow by Mekhliganj Centre

Rehabilitation: Mekhliganj centre helped an old widow living nearby to build her house. The construction was completed on 24 May.

Flood Relief: Assam: (a) In the wake of heavy rainfall leading to flooding and submerging of various parts of Karimganj district, **Karimganj** centre distributed 2,050 kg rice, 420 kg dal, 1,000 kg potatoes, 84 litres of edible oil, 425 kg salt, 84 kg milk powder, 840 packets of biscuits, 2,430 packets of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), and 1,268 halogen tablets among 405 flood-affected families from 17 to 22 June. (b) Following the recent floods in Cachar district, **Silchar** centre conducted a medical camp and provided free medicines to 722 patients in government shelter homes on 19 and 20 June.

Karnataka and Kerala: An extraordinary south-west monsoon in August lashed parts of Karnataka and Kerala with incessant torrential rains resulting in flooding of all the major rivers and landslides which led to loss of hundreds of

lives, livestock, and property. In response to this disaster, the following centres conducted relief services mentioned below:

(i) **Karnataka: Ponnampet** centre distributed 5,730 kg rice, 1,146 kg flour, 1,146 kg dal, 372 kg assorted spices, 573 kg salt, 573 litres of edible oil, 286 kg tea leaves, 573 kg sugar, 1,146 bed-sheets, 1,146 towels, 1,146 bars of bathing soap, 573 packets of washing soap, 2,292 sanitary items, 573 packets of candles, 573 packets of matchboxes, 1,719 toothbrushes, 573 tubes of toothpaste, and 1,146 pairs of slippers among 573 flood-affected families in Kodagu district from 20 to 30 August.

(ii) **Kerala:** (a) **Coimbatore Math** distributed 4,800 kg rice, 720 kg dal, 680 kg onions, 288 kg of assorted spices, 720 kg salt, 235 litres of edible oil, 225 kg tea leaves, and 720 kg sugar among 720 flood-affected families in Palakkad and Malappuram districts of Kerala from 21 to 27 August; 12,096 notebooks, 2,040 geometry

Flood Relief by Karimganj Centre



Flood Relief by Silchar Centre





Flood Relief by Ponnampet Centre



Flood Relief by Coimbatore Math Centre

boxes, and 3,600 pens from 27 September to 8 October.

(b) **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya** distributed 4,027 kg rice, 665 kg dal, 953 kg assorted vegetables, 665 litres of edible oil, 3,092 kg assorted groceries, 2,000 buns, 1,330 packets of biscuits, 665 kg sugar, 1,223 blankets, 50 T-shirts, 25 ladies' garments, 30 children's garments, 1,223 mats, 460 water pots, and 498 sets of utensils (each set containing 2 pots, 1 *karahi*, 2 ladles, 5 plates, 2 tumblers, and 1 mug) among 1,504 flood-affected families in Palakkad and Idukki districts of Kerala from 19 to 25 August; 4,972 kg rice, 1,120 kg dal, 1,061 litres of edible oil, 4,339 kg assorted groceries, 150 buns, 1,253 packets of biscuits, 1,218 kg sugar, 299 blankets, 137 gents' garments, 60 ladies' garments, 62 children's garments, 714 mats, 993 sets of utensils (each set containing 2 pots, 1 *karahi*, 2 ladles, 5 plates, 2

tumblers, and 1 mug), 649 kg bleaching powder, and 1,990 bags among 995 flood-affected families in Palakkad and Idukki districts of Kerala from 30 August to 6 September; 268 kg rice, 242 kg assorted groceries, 27 packets of biscuits, 272 blankets, 7 gents' garments, 267 mats, 272 sets of utensils (each set containing 2 pots, 1 *karahi*, 2 ladles, 5 plates, 2 tumblers, and 1 mug), 4,600 kg cattle-feed, 1,30,324 notebooks, 10,080 geometry boxes, 21,600 pens, 200 school bags, and 200 pencil cases among 272 flood-affected families and 14,216 students in Kottayam and Thirissur districts of Kerala from 21 to 28 September.

(c) **Haripad** centre distributed 2,610 kg rice, 634 kg dal, 763 litres of edible oil, 522 kg salt, 522 kg sugar, 2,181 litres of drinking water, 522 blankets, 522 saris, 522 lungis/dhotis, 522 bed-sheets, 317 towels, 317 mats, 317 mosquito-repellents, 317 phials of antiseptic liquid, 522 packets

Flood Relief by Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya



Flood Relief by Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya





Flood Relief by Haripad Centre



Flood Relief by Haripad Centre

of matchboxes, 522 utensil sets (each set containing a tumbler, a mug, a plate, and a bucket), 522 bars of bathing soap, 281 kg of bleaching powder, and 317 litres of phenyl among 522 flood-affected families in Haripad from 27 to 30 August.

(d) **Kalady** centre provided shelter and food to about 1,800 people at the relief camp in the centre's school for 7 days from 15 August. The centre also supplied milk to children and rendered medical aid to patients at the camp. Further, it distributed 16,790 kg rice, 1,679 kg dal, 300 kg coconut oil, 979 kg assorted spices, 1,679 kg salt, 1,100 kg sugar, 4,108 bed-sheets, 30 towels, 4,185 plastic mats, 4,185 buckets, 4,185 mugs, 4,108 jugs, 4,185 bars of bathing soaps, 4,185 tubes of toothpaste, 8,216 toothbrushes, 1,174 vials of antiseptic liquid, and 500 mosquito-coils among 4,108 flood-affected families in Ernakulam district from 10 to 27 August; 25,700 kg rice, 5,265 kg dal, 481 kg assorted spices, 1,201 kg salt, 205 kg tea leaves, 1,100 kg sugar, 1,895 bed-sheets,

Flood Relief by Kalady Centre



2,970 towels, 4,595 mats, 3,948 buckets, 3,948 mugs, 4,679 jugs, 4,576 bars of bathing soap, 4,596 tubes of toothpastes, 9,352 toothbrushes, 684 phials of antiseptic liquid, and 100 mosquito-coils among 4,629 flood-affected families in Ernakulam district from 28 August to 15 September; 2,01,620 notebooks, 10,000 drawing books, 1,01,988 pens, 35,000 geometry boxes, and 1,768 crayon boxes among 22,284 students from 25 September to 22 October.

(e) **Kayamkulam** centre distributed 2,200 kg rice, 200 kg dal, 200 kg semolina, 200 kg potatoes, 200 kg onions, 200 kg salt, 100 bed-sheets, 200 towels, 100 buckets, 100 mugs, and 100 mats among 400 people in Alappuzha district from 15 August to 10 September.

(f) **Kochi** centre distributed 1,750 kg rice, 1,050 kg dal, 1,050 kg assorted spices, 350 kg salt, 35 kg tea leaves, 350 kg sugar, 700 ladies' garments, 490 dhotis, 240 T-shirts, 590 assorted garments, 350 bed-sheets, 350 towels, and 350

Flood Relief by Kalady Centre





Flood Relief by Kochi Centre

plastic mats among 660 flood-affected families in Ernakulam district from 20 to 30 August; 1,650 kg rice, 330 kg dal, 165 litres of cooking oil, 80 kg salt, 330 kg sugar, 330 dhotis, 410 ladies' garments, 330 bed-sheets, 330 towels, and 330 mats among 330 flood-affected families in Ernakulam district from 1 to 9 September; 500 kg rice, 100 kg dal, 100 kg sugar, 300 dhotis, 300 ladies' garments, 330 bed-sheets, 30 pillows, 330 mats, 43,239 notebooks, 10,395 pens, and 1,791 geometry boxes among 530 flood-affected families and 6,107 students in Ernakulam district from 24 September to 10 October.

(g) **Koyilandy** centre distributed 8,253 kg rice, 2,470 kg dal, 288 kg semolina, 2,454 packets of snacks, 72 kg tea leaves, 288 kg sugar, 342 litres of water, 100 dhotis, 1,449 lungis, 32 shirts, 748 T-shirts, 171 trousers, 309 saris, 621 ladies' garments, 43 children's garments, 1,308

Flood Relief by Koyilandy Centre



Flood Relief by Kochi Centre

bed-sheets, 1,226 towels, 288 tarpaulins, 618 bars of bathing soap, 576 sanitary items, 57 vials of antiseptic liquid, 288 buckets, and 288 mugs among 1,222 flood-affected families in Kannur and Kozhikode districts from 14 to 28 August; 1,540 kg rice, 465 kg dal, 600 packets of snacks, 220 kg sugar, 50 dhotis, 220 lungis, 270 shirts, 50 T-shirts, 980 saris, 270 ladies' garments, 270 bed-sheets, 220 towels, 220 bowls, 220 utensil-lids, 1,320 packets of candles, 135 kg of nutrition mixture, and 50 phials of antiseptic liquid among 270 flood-affected families in Kannur and Kozhikode districts from 31 August to 2 September; 18,144 notebooks, 2,016 drawing books, 1,320 geometry boxes, 5,400 pens, 700 school bags, and 700 umbrellas among 700 students in Kannur district from 5 to 20 October.

(h) **Kozhikode** centre distributed 6,390 kg rice, 1,238 kg dal, 880 packets of biscuits, 10 kg

Flood Relief by Koyilandy Centre





Flood Relief by Kozhikode Centre

milk powder, 3 kg tea leaves, 10 kg sugar, 619 bed-sheets, 644 lungis, 669 ladies' garments, and 100 assorted garments among 989 flood-affected families in Wayanad and Kozhikode districts from 16 to 26 August; 910 kg rice, 182 kg dal, 1,131 lungis, 2,208 shirts, 2,208 T-shirts, 1,131 ladies' garments, 1,131 bed-sheets, 6,612 bars of bathing soap, 13,224 bars of washing soap, 6,612 tubes of toothpaste, and 13,224 toothbrushes among 1,131 flood-affected families in Wayanad and Kozhikode districts from 27 August to 13 September; 2,424 notebooks, 404 drawing books, 146 geometry boxes, and 837 pens among 404 students in Kozhikode district on 29 September.

(i) **Pala** centre served 510 chapatis to 60 families and distributed 225 kg rice, 120 kg dal, 20 kg flour, 10 kg rice powder, 20 coconuts, 4 kg of assorted spices, 20 kg salt, 170 packets of biscuits, 2 kg tea leaves, 20 kg sugar, 70 bars of bathing soap, 70 bars of washing soap, 50 packets of washing powder, 20 towels, 70 tubes of toothpaste, 70 toothbrushes, and 50 vials of oil among 95 flood-affected families in Kottayam and Ernakulam districts from 18 to 24 August; 1,000 kg rice, 200 kg dal, 50 litres of cooking oil, 100 kg salt, 200 kg sugar, 102 packets of snacks, 500 ladies' garments, 580 lungis, 580 bed-sheets, and 830 towels among 830 flood-affected families in Kottayam district from 1 to 20 September; 26,489 notebooks, 2,023 geometry boxes, and 4,131 pens among 2,920 students in Kottayam



Flood Relief by Pala Centre

district from 26 September to 10 October.

(j) **Thrissur** centre gave shelter to 324 flood-affected persons at the relief camp in its higher secondary school from 14 to 23 August. Further, it distributed 1,100 kg rice, 110 kg cereals, 210 kg dal, 130 litres of cooking oil, 110 kg tamarind, 110 kg chilli powder, 110 kg salt, 110 kg tea leaves, 385 kg sugar, 534 blankets, 534 saris, 534 lungis, 534 towels, 534 mats, 434 pillows, 534 bars of bathing soap, 534 bars of washing soap, and 534 buckets among 675 flood-affected families in Thrissur district from 23 to 27 August; 5,979 kg rice, 180 kg flour, 1,053 kg dal, 760 kg semolina, 220 litres of cooking oil, 245 kg assorted spices, 232 kg salt, 154 kg tea leaves, 2 kg coffee powder, 2 kg milk powder, 1,240 kg sugar, 1,215 packets of biscuits, 1,066 blankets, 1,216 saris, 766 lungis, 450 shirts, 450 trousers, 900 assorted garments, 1,216 towels, 20 school bags, 766 mats, 56 pillows, 1,407 bars of bathing soap, 959 bars of washing soap, 766 buckets, 641 tubes of toothpastes, 641 toothbrushes, 384 candles, 192 matchboxes, 225 litres of phenol, and 450 sanitary items among 1,984 flood-affected families in Thrissur district from 28 August to 22 September.

(k) **Tiruvalla** centre distributed 2,386 kg rice, 485 kg flour, 111 kg vermicelli, 971 kg dal, 2,067 packets of biscuits/rusks, 55 packets of baby food, 25 kg tea leaves, 971 kg sugar, 765 litres of drinking water, 721 dhotis, 261 lungis, 344 T-shirts, 610 saris, 1,259 ladies' garments, 200 assorted



Flood Relief by Thrissur Centre

garments, 1,386 bed-sheets, 1,305 towels, 1,274 mats, 683 buckets, 100 cooking pots, 100 ladles, 181 tumblers, 281 plates, 100 kg bleaching powder, 1,432 bars of bathing soap, 181 bars of washing soap, 300 other sanitary items, 181 mugs, 181 packets of candles, 181 packets of matchboxes, 306 toothbrushes, 206 tubes of toothpaste, 404 umbrellas, 404 wipers, 81 mosquito-coils, and other materials among 1,484 flood-affected families in Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta districts from 16 to 26 August.

Manipur: In response to the heavy rainfall and the resultant flooding of rivers and breaching of riverbanks, **Imphal** centre distributed 10,950 kg rice, 2,000 kg dal, 1,082 litres of edible oil, 1,100 kg salt and other food items among 1,070 flood-affected families in Wangoi area of Imphal West district on 25 and 26 June.

Tripura: In response to a heavy rainfall and flooding of various parts of Unakoti district in June, **Kailashahar** centre distributed 800 kg rice, 37 kg dal, 2,550 kg flattened rice, 175 kg salt, 330 kg sugar, 214 kg milk powder, 848 packets of biscuits, 2,414 litres of water, 1,330 sets of utensils (each set containing a cooking pot, a ladle, a bucket, and a mug), 3,000 saris, 2,000 dhotis, 1,727 notebooks, 576 bars of soap, and 320 packets of candles among 2,986 flood-affected families from 14 June to 13 July.

Uttar Pradesh: In the wake of heavy rainfall and flooding in Gonda district, **Lucknow**



Flood Relief by Tiruvalla Centre

centre distributed 500 kg flattened rice, 125 kg sugar, 250 plastic sheets, 3,000 candles, and 500 matchboxes among 214 flood-affected families from 4 to 8 September; 1,250 kg rice, 1,250 kg flour, 500 kg dal, 1,250 kg potatoes, 250 kg salt, 902 saris, 860 lungis, 530 mosquito-nets, and 100 matchboxes among 816 flood-affected families in Gonda and Ayodhya districts from 13 to 21 September.

West Bengal: (i) **Belgharia** centre distributed 1,200 blankets, 540 jackets, and 500 saris among 1,200 flood-affected families in Daspur area of Paschim Medinipur district from 1 November to 1 March. (ii) **Jalpaiguri** centre distributed 300 blankets among 300 flood-affected families in Jalpaiguri district on 2 December. (iii) In the wake of heavy rains and flooding of the Dwarakeshwar river, **Bankura** centre distributed 550 kg rice, 210 kg dal, 500 kg flattened rice, 196 kg molasses, 200 packets of biscuits, 72 torches, 204 packets of matchboxes, 204 packets of candles, 40 saris, 80 bed-sheets, 16 tarpaulins, 23 kg plastic sheets, and 4,000 halogen tablets among 200 flood-affected families in Bankura district from 7 to 29 August; 160 saris, 48 lungis, 96 dhotis, and 26,000 halogen tablets among 230 flood-affected families in Bankura district from 30 August to 29 September. (iv) Continuous rains on 3, 4, and 5 August resulted in a flood-like situation in Jhargram district. In response to the calamity, **Jhargram** centre served

nearly 7,600 plates of cooked food among flood-affected people in six wards of Jhargram town from 6 to 10 August. The centre also distributed saris, dhotis, lungis, tarpaulins, and cooking utensils among affected families; 327 kg puffed rice, 18 kg flattened rice, 94 kg sweets, 2,680 assorted snacks, 872 packets of biscuits, 126 litres of water, 400 saris, 200 dhotis, 50 lungis, and 75 tarpaulins among 7,300 affected persons.

Fiji: Heavy rains caused by a tropical cyclone on 1 April resulted in flooding of most of the low-lying areas in and around Nadi. In response to the calamity, **Fiji** centre distributed 2,192 kg rice, 1,990 kg flour, 1,685 kg dal, 274 litres of cooking oil, 846 kg sugar, 548 kg salt, 55 kg tea leaves, 30 kg turmeric, 1,989 packets of biscuits, 1,000 T-shirts, 250 tops, 500 shorts, 219 kg washing powder, 250 bars of bathing soap, and 250 mosquito-coils among 663 flood-affected families from 2 to 19 April. Moreover, medical assistance was provided to about 250 patients.

Cyclone Relief: West Bengal: Ramharipur centre distributed, from 9 to 25 June 2018, 464 asbestos sheets, 330 long wooden strips, 391 wooden beams, and 137 ridge covers among 55 families of 14 villages in Bankura district whose houses had been damaged by a cyclone.

Odisha: A very severe cyclonic storm 'Titli' hit the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha on 11 October. In response to the calamity, **Bhubaneswar** centre distributed 600 saris, 600 dhotis, 600 shirts, 300 trousers, 600 towels, 300 mosquito-nets, and 1,500 packets of biscuits among 300 families in 12 remote villages of Gajapati district on 20 and 21 October 2018.

Summer Relief: Hyderabad centre distributed 50,455 litres of buttermilk and 1.34 lakh litres of drinking water to thirsty wayfarers in Hyderabad city and Karimnagar and Mahbubnagar districts from 31 March to 7 June. **Salem** centre distributed 3,560 litres of buttermilk from

1 to 31 May. **Chennai Mission Ashrama** distributed about 21,700 litres of buttermilk from 1 to 31 May. **Puri Mission Ashrama** served about 3,000 litres of lemonade from 1 April to 31 May.

Drought Rehabilitation: Vadodara centre desilted 10 wells in Dahod district, Gujarat, from 15 April to 30 May in order to provide drinking water facility to the tribal community living there.



Eye Camps			
Centre	Patients	Spectacles	Surgeries
Asansol	50	-	9
Bankura	1,665	165	291
Chengalpattu and Chennai Math	141	74	12
Delhi	433	105	81
Ghatshila	685	330	330
Gourhati	240	0	22
Halasuru	153	114	114
Kamarpukur	1,933	279	359
Kanpur	34	-	-
Lucknow	9928	-	829
Madurai	595	8	111
Mayavati	1,526	150	324
Medinipur	422	-	38
Nagpur	486	265	91
Porbandar	323	-	125
Rahara	152	-	44
Rajamahendravaram	967	183	91
Rajkot	366	-	194
Ranchi Morabadi	6,271	415	88
Salem	757	156	146
Saradapitha	1,143	-	150
Seva Pratishthan	254	27	27
Vadodara	1,577	69	37
Visakhapatnam	286	-	10
Total	30,387	2,340	3,523

Correction · December 2018, pp. 796, Image: Read John Kaag instead of Agnes Boyle O'Reilly Hocking.

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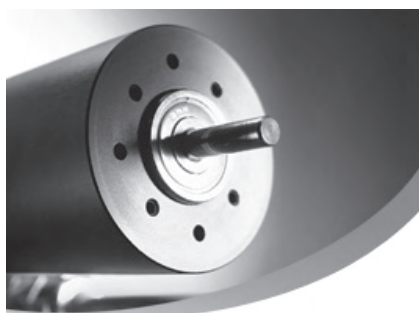


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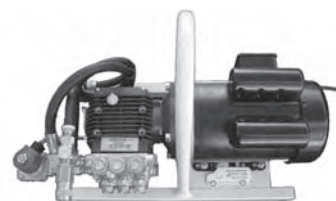
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Preservation and Extension of Shyampukur Bati, the most important and sacred tirtha of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Dear Friend/devotee/well-wisher,

You all know that Sri Ramakrishna spent the last few months of his life (naranila) in Shyampukur Bati and Cossipore.

Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples stayed in Shyampukur Bati for 2 to 3 months. It was on these holy premises that Sri Ramakrishna was worshipped as Mother Kali on Kali puja night by Girish Ghosh and other devotees. Sri Ramakrishna also manifested many bhavas, and samadhis in this place.

In November 2017 this holy place was recognized as a full-fledged branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. This house is now 180 years old. For its proper preservation, comprehensive repair work is urgently needed. Further, accommodation is required to house all the inmate sadhus and also to slowly begin service activities.

To meet the above urgent needs we wish to purchase one or two nearby houses.
For this we require a minimum sum of Rupees four Crores.

I fervently appeal to all the devotees, donors and well-wishers to donate generously to make the above project successful.

All donations are eligible for tax exemption under section 80-G of LT.Act 1961. Kindly send your donation through NC payee cheque, Demand Draft or Bank Transfer. United Bank of India, Baghbazar branch; NC No.0090010362696

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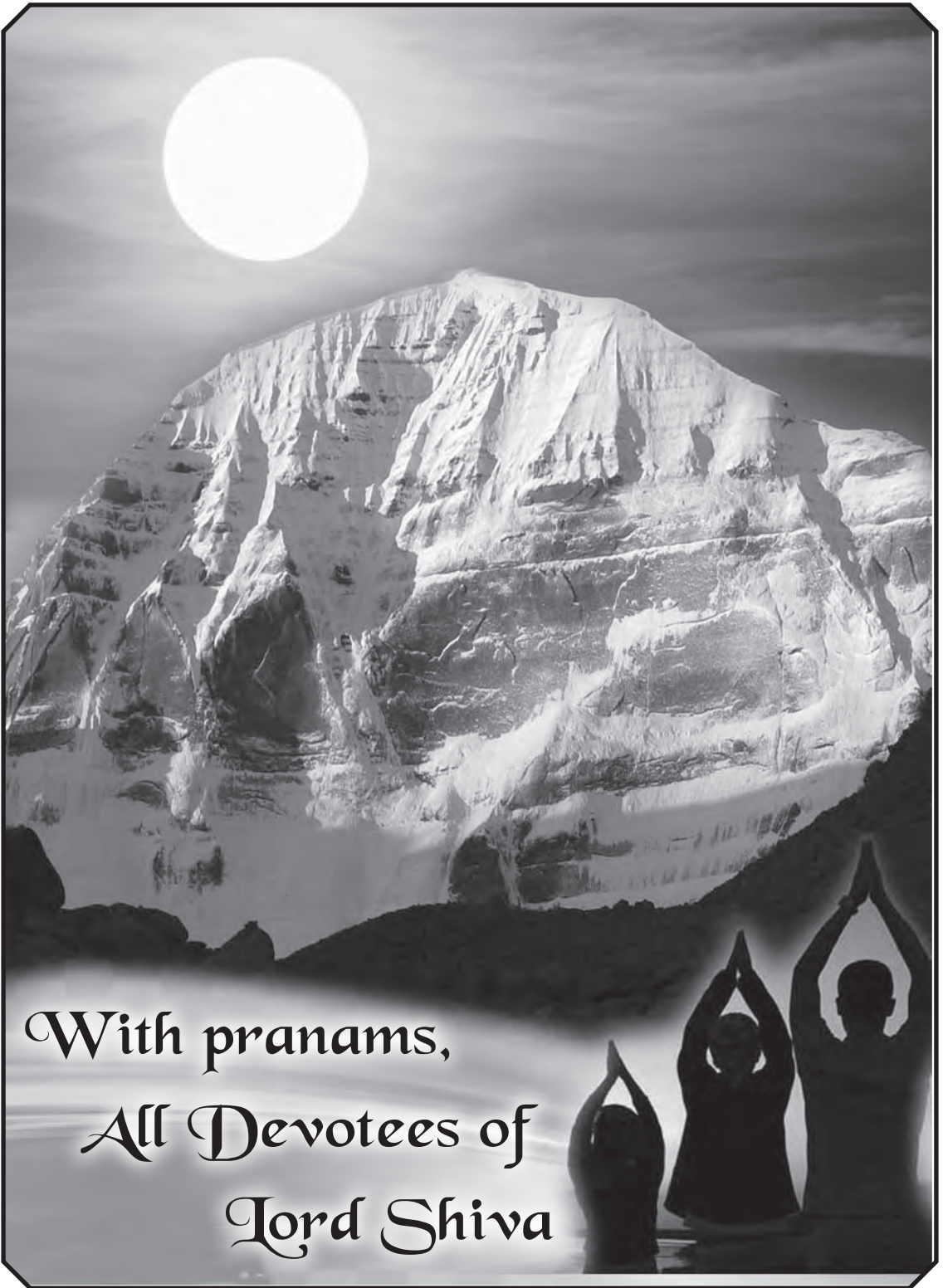
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Adhyaksha
Swami Parasharananda
Ramakrishna Math,
Shyampukur Bati



Ramakrishna Math, Shyampukur Bati
55 A, Shyampukur Street, Kolkata 700004
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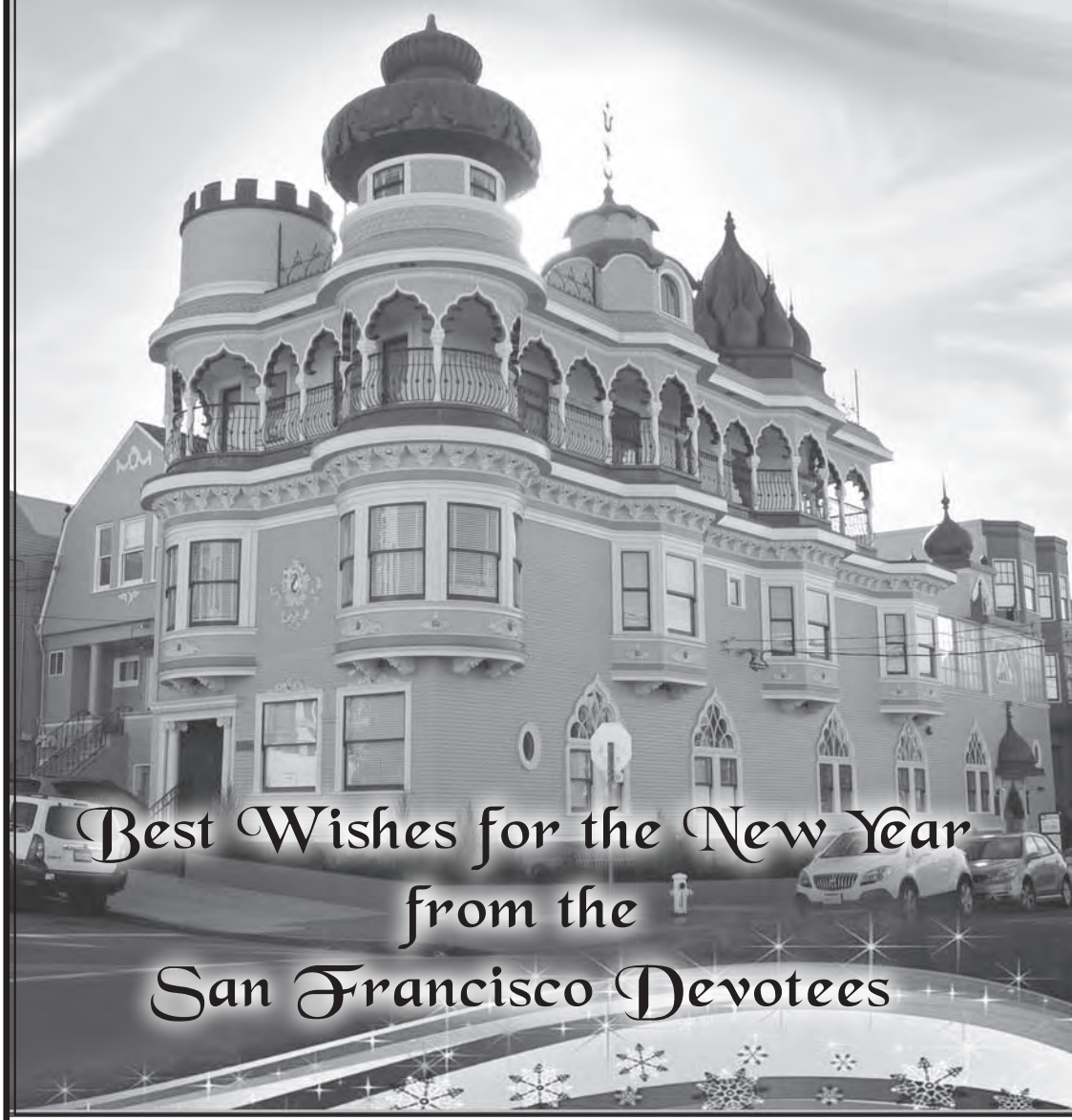
*Dear Ma,
Thank you for wonderful Darshan.
With loving pranams,*

*Ferdos, Valerie, Nahid and Tamara
Trabuco Canyon, USA*



“Believe me, if there is the least tinge of selfishness in building this temple, it will fall; but if it is the Master’s work, it will stand.”

— Swami Trigunatitananda



*Best Wishes for the New Year
from the
San Francisco Devotees*



“Shri Ramakrishna was a wonderful gardener. Therefore he has made a bouquet of different flowers and formed his Order. All different types and ideas have come into it, and many more will come. Know each of those who are here to be of great spiritual power. Because they remain shrivelled before me, do not think them to be ordinary souls. When they will go out, they will be the cause of the awakening of spirituality in people. Know them to be part of the spiritual body of Shri Ramakrishna, who was the embodiment of infinite religious ideas. [Y]ou may go round the world, but it is doubtful if you will find men of such spirituality and faith in God like them. They are each a centre of religious power, and in time that power will manifest.”

Swami Vivekananda [referring to his brother disciples]

*With loving pranams from your
Dedicated Servants.*

—Singapore Devotees

Who is the Best devotee of God? It is he who sees, after the realization of Brahman that God alone has become all living beings the universe, and the twenty-four cosmic principles.

—Sri Ramakrishna



**Happy New Year from the
DC DEVOTEES**





TO

SRI YOGACHARYA B.K.S. IYENGAR



Devoted Students

—CAROLYN BELKO

SAN DIEGO, USA





“Do not fear, my child. Always remember that the Master is behind you. I am also with you. As long as you remember me, your mother, why should be frightened? The Master said to me, ‘In the end I shall certainly liberate those who come to you.’ ”

—Holy Mother Sree Sarada Devi



Swami Prabuddhananda
(1929–2014)

—Devotees of Northern California

*“Come up, O lions, and
shake off the delusion that
you are sheep; you are souls
immortal, spirits free, blest
and eternal.”*

—Swami Vivekananda



Vedanta Society of Tucson

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Website : <http://www.vedantatucson.org>



**Swami Vijnananandaji's
150th Birthday Anniversary**



**Swami Swahananda
(1921–2012)**

Monoj, Sumita, Malay,
Arati & Debesh Das
Los Angeles, USA



The light of
Freedom on mankind.

Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world.
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed

"To the Fourth of July" Poem by
Swami Vivekananda



CLEVELAND VEDANTA CENTER

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

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Email: vedantacleveland@gmail.com



"My child, you have been extremely fortunate in getting this human birth. Have intense devotion to God. One must work hard. Can one achieve anything without effort? You must devote some time for prayer even in the midst of the busiest hours of the day."

—Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi



"In loving memory of
My parents Sushil and Mala"

—ANIRBAN BOSE

Some of Our Publications...

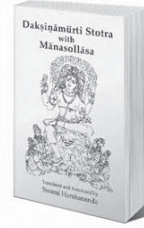
Dakshinamurti Stotra with Manasollasa

Swami Harshananda

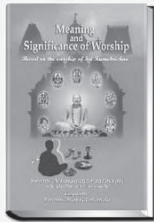
In the Indian hymnal literature, the stotras of Sri Shankaracharya occupy a unique place. They are charmingly simple, and yet, simply charming. The panegyric material of the hymns often alternates with the moral principles or spiritual values.

In a few rare hymns, Sri Shankaracharya has introduced masterly condensations of the doctrines of Advaita Vedanta. And, Dakshinamurti Stotra is a masterpiece among them, combining in itself poetical elegance as well as metaphysical brilliance. Sureshvara has written a varttika on this stotra called Manasollasa, 'that which exhilarates the mind'.

In this book, Revered Swami Harshananda Maharaj, a senior scholar-monk of the Ramakrishna Order, has translated into English this Dakshinamurti Stotra and Manasollasa, with lucid annotations.



Pages 248
Price ₹ 145



Pages 344
Price ₹ 150

Meaning and Significance of Worship (Based on the worship of Sri Ramakrishna) *Swami Achalananda Sarasvati*

This book deals with the meaning and significance of worship of Sri Ramakrishna. It contains the mantras in Sanskrit, roman transliteration, word-by-word meanings, and English translations, with detailed descriptions and insightful explanations of the procedures followed.

Compiling the meanings and explanations of Swami Achalananda Sarasvati, a disciple of Revered Yatiswaranandaji Maharaj and a Sanskrit scholar well-versed in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, Swami Muktidananda has shaped the material in form of this book, with pictures and summary charts.

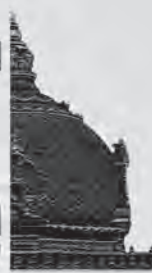
The present edition in new layout is further enriched with additional material and pictures.

This book is a must for all devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, especially those who perform his worship.



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—Swami Vivekananda

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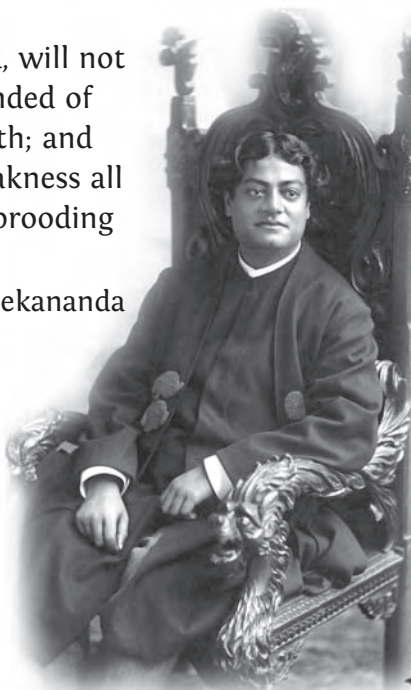
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2. Childhood of Swami Vivekananda
3. Nari Adhikar (Hindi)
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Allied Books :

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Swami Nirvanananda, Vice-President (1966-1984)
Ramakrishna Math And Ramakrishna Mission

Question: How can one easily realise God ?

Answer: The day one can love his friend and foe in the same light, he can easily realize God

—Srimat Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj

This answer was given by Revered Maharaj in his room at Belur Math in 1971, in response to the question by my mother, a disciple of Swami Nirvananandaji.

With sastanga pranams from his Anonymous Disciple

Swami Vireswarananda
Ramakrishna Math,
P.O. Belur Math, Howrah.

23/2/1969

My dear Bhaskar,

Glad to receive your letter dated 18/2 & to know everything about you. May Sri Ramakrishna be gracious to you & grant you pure love to his lotus feet is my prayer to Him on this public celebration of his birthday today when thousands have come to pay their respects to him.

Now to your questions:

It is good you are trying to repeat the Mantra as many times as you can. Raise it slowly to at least ***** every morning & ***** in the evening. There is no limit for Japa. The more Japa you make the quicker will be your spiritual progress. But then you should not go beyond your capacity lest it affects your health.

Concentration does not come so very easily, you go on with your meditation daily & in course of time you will get it.

To dream about Sri Ramakrishna is good but do not give too much importance to it.

It is desire that makes the mind restless and consequently you do not get good concentration. Renounce these desires through discrimination (Vichar) & purify your mind & you will get concentration.

I do not remember having received any letter from you before this. I think there was nothing in it besides these few questions which you have repeated in this letter. If there was anything more please write to me again. Please convey my love and blessings to your father and mother.

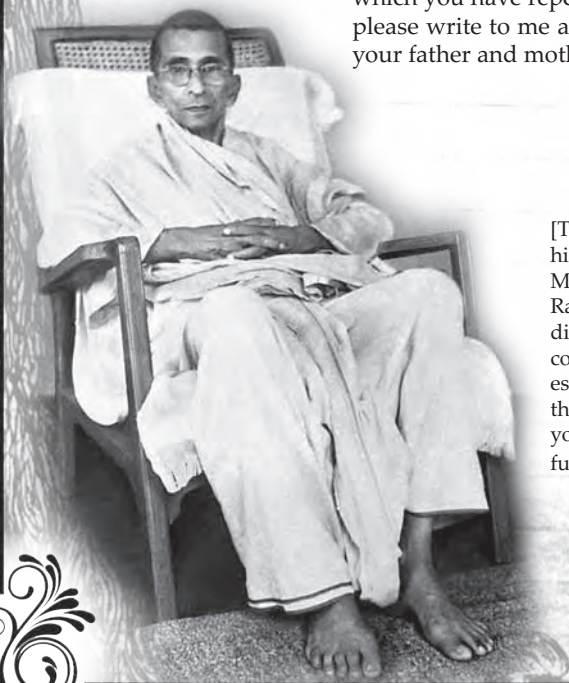
With love and blessings

Affectionately yours,
Vireswarananda

[The first among the numerous letters written in his own hand by Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, 10th President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission to Bhaskar, his 13 year old disciple from New Delhi, almost fifty years back. It contains, in simple words, some of the profound essentials of living a spiritual life. Readers may note that towards the end, Revered Maharaj requests his young disciple to write to him again if he had any further queries.]

In reverential homage

**Bani, Bhaskar, Debasree, Devajit &
Ruchira Roy**
(Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi)



Unselfishness is more paying, only
people have not the patience to
practise it.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—



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An Appeal

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We all know that **Tirtharaj Prayag (Allahabad)** is a place for versatility of religions and spirituality. Not only different sects of the Hindu Dharma, but also people of all religion and faith come to Prayag to feel the gigantic vibrations penetrating the very spiritual atmosphere of Tirtharaj Prayag. One can see confluence of religions during the time of **Kumbha Mela**, which is a sort of a mini **India**. By the grace of spiritual teachers from time immemorial, pious devotees come to **Kumbha Mela** to take dip in the Triveni Sangam— and be sanctified. The upcoming **Kumbha Mela** is scheduled from 14 January to 19 February 2019. **Per Government estimates, more than 15 crore sadhus, devotees and pilgrims will take bath in the holy water during the Mela.**



Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad, will take this opportunity to extend its helping hand of service among more than five lakh Sadhus, Devotees and Pilgrims from the remotest corners of the country. This will be a unique opportunity for us to spread the message of the Holy Trio among devotees — and receive blessings by fulfilling the dream of Swamiji: "**Service to Man is Service to God.**" With the blessings of the Most Revered **Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj** (the founder of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad in the year 1910), we are planning to organise a camp in the bank of Triveni Sangam.

During the Mela days, the following facilities will be provided to devotees/pilgrims:

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- ❖ Round-the-clock free charitable dispensary with emergency facilities
- ❖ Book stall
- ❖ Photo gallery of the Holy Trio
- ❖ Boarding/lodging facilities for Sadhus, devotees and pilgrims.

The expected cost of this Kumbha Mela Camp is calculated at approx. Rs 1,50,00,000 (Rupees one crore and fifty lakh only). To meet such high expense we request to you and other generous devotees to contribute and help us in our good work — as well as be a member in the **SevaYajna** started by **Swami Vivekananda** himself.

Your kind donation will be gladly accepted and acknowledged which may be either A/C payee Cheque / Draft in favour of 'Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama— Allahabad' or by Bank Transfer (NEFT/RTGS) on State Bank of India, Allahabad, A/C no: 10210448619, IFSC: SBIN0002584 . All the donations are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G(5)(vi) of Income tax Act, 1961. Please send your Pan No: along with your Donation. Our PAN No is AAAARIO77P.

Hope all of you will grab this unique opportunity by helping us to make our Mission successful.



Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama
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Phone : (0532) 2413369, Mob: 9453630406
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Swami Akshayananda
Secretary

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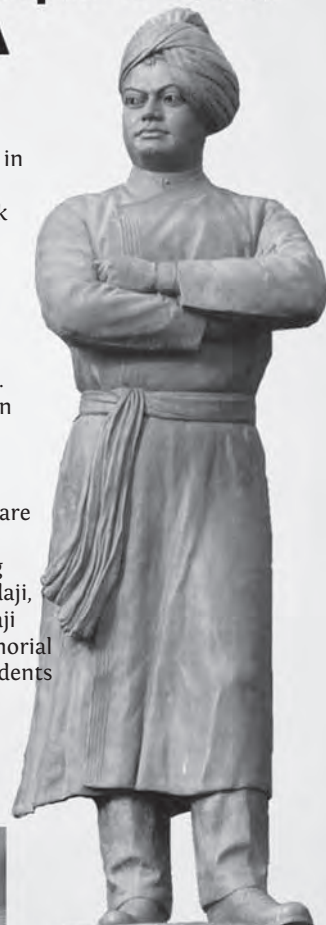
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Amongst the service activities we engage in are the following:

- ❑ Supporting over 1,600 financially weak students with Vivekananda Scholarships in Bangladesh, India and South Africa in the Year 2018.
- ❑ Providing funding for Schools, Orphanages, Libraries and Temples in Bangladesh.
- ❑ Funding relief works during flood and other natural calamities in Bangladesh and India.
- ❑ Working with over 150 Ramakrishna Mission Centers, some which are affiliated with Belur Math and some which are privately run.
- ❑ Honoring other past great Swamis of Ramakrishna Order including Subodhanandaji, Premeshanandaji, Bhuteshanandaji, Chandikanandaji, Atmasthanandaji, Swahanandaji, Aksharanandaji & Tathagatanandaji and Sadhu Nag Mahasaya & Master Mahasaya by establishing Memorial Funds in their names for the Vivekananda Scholarship to serve students in remote villages.
- ❑ Established Vivekananda History Fund in Dhaka University and Jagannath University at Dhaka.
- ❑ Created the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Fund for Vivekananda Scholarship in South Africa and Zambia.



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